Hitchhiker

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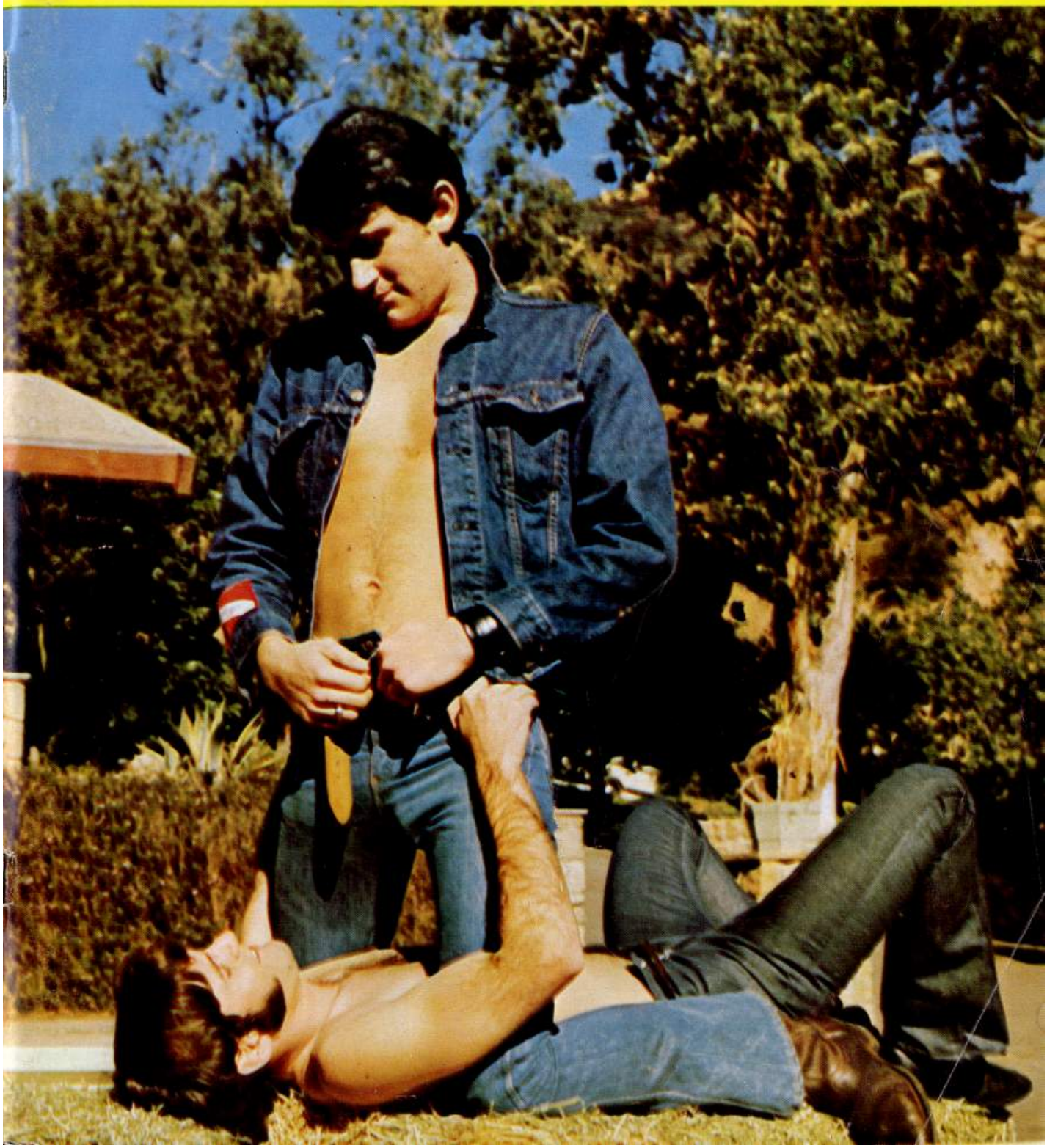
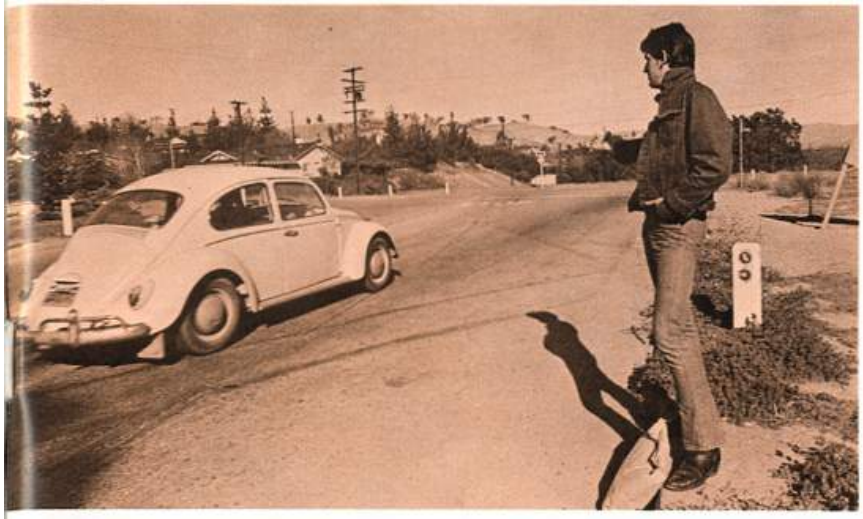
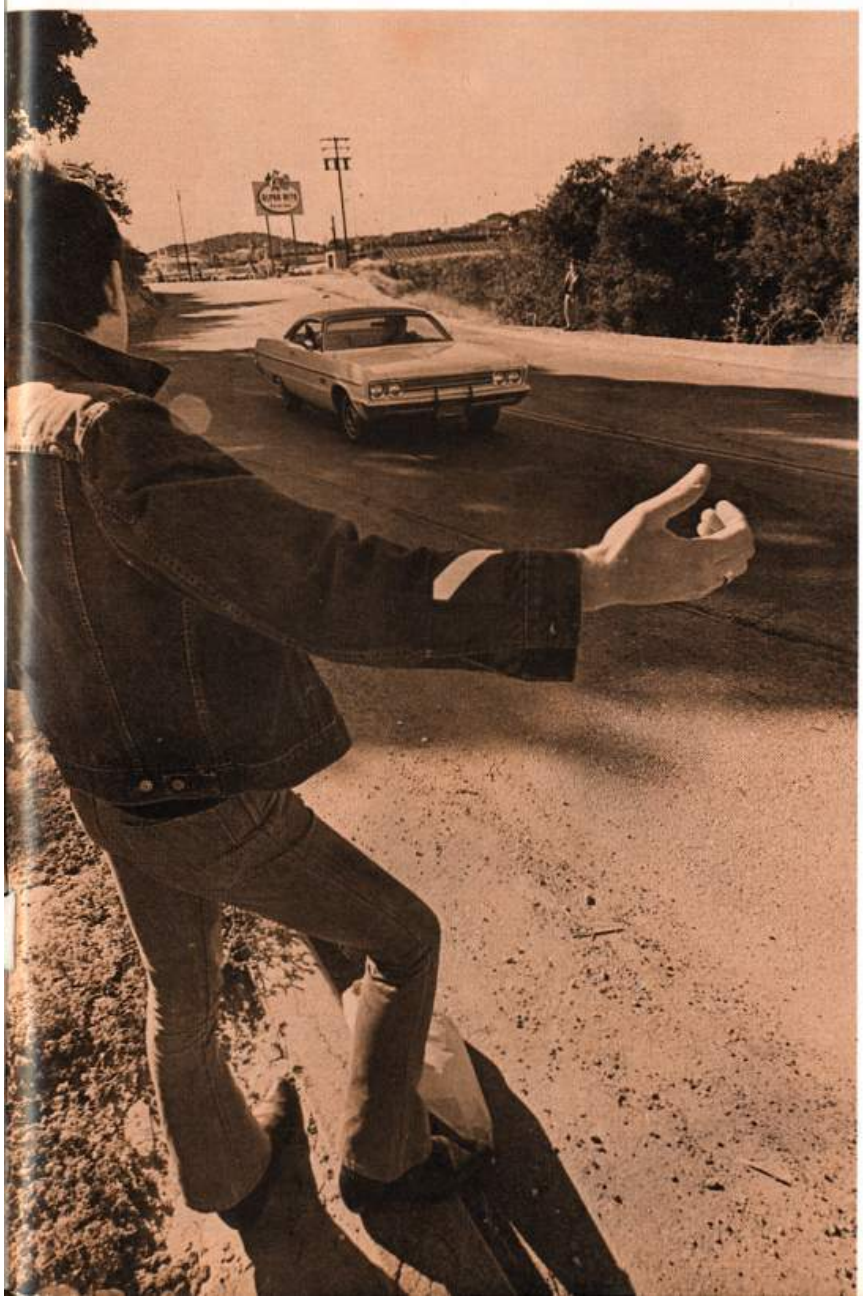


Hitchhiker

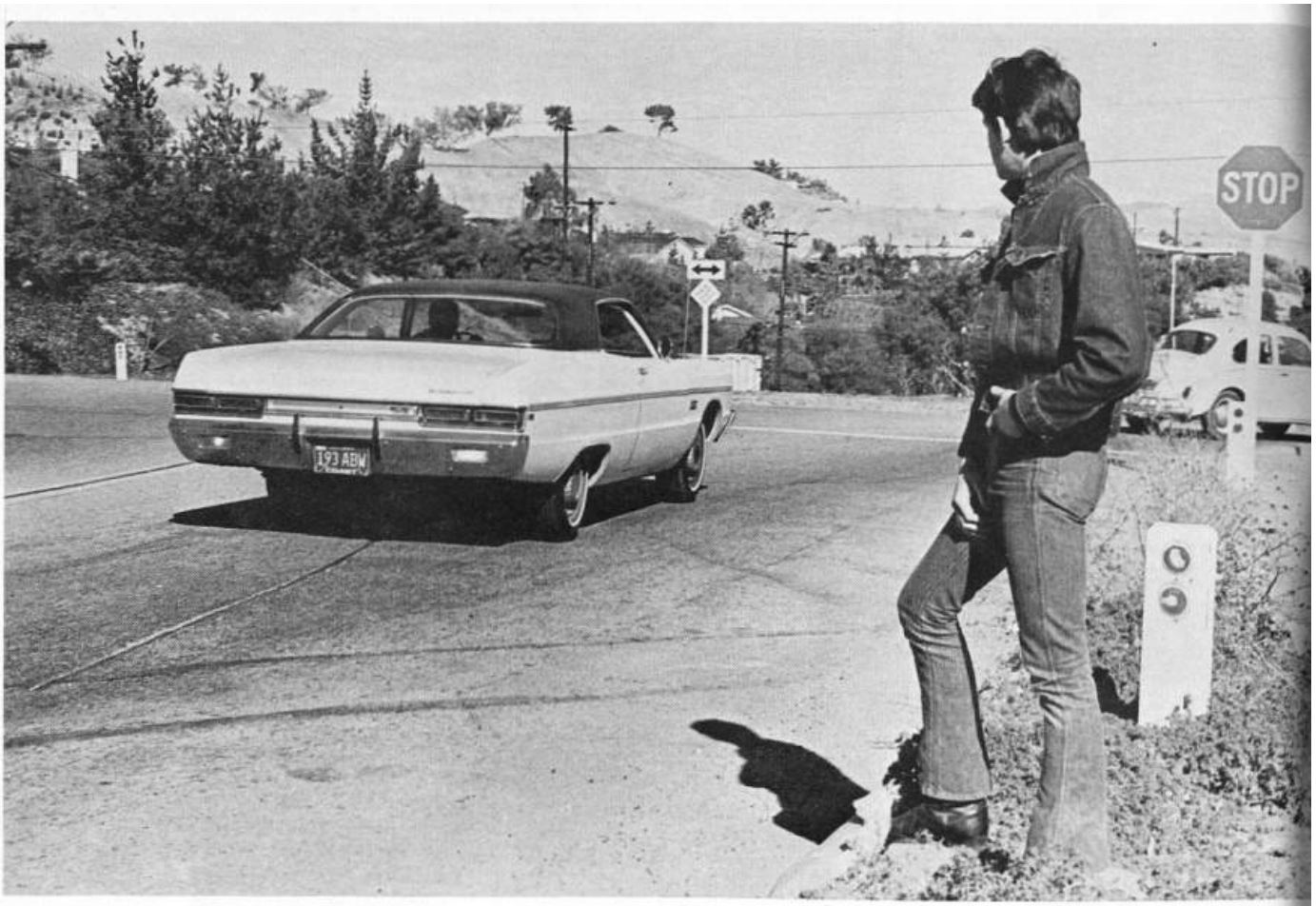
ALL STAR ENTERPRISES





If you're driving along the city streets and you see a guy standing on the sidewalk with his thumb sticking out, he's hitching a ride. Chances are he knows where he wants to go. He's probably going to see a friend or he's on his way home. He's not a hitch-hiker—not really. He's just a guy hitching a ride.

Now, if you're whizzing along the highway and you come into a small town and you find a fellow standing by the side of the road with his thumb out, *he's* a hitch-hiker. Chances are that he doesn't know where he's going. But one thing's for sure, it isn't home. He doesn't have what you'd call a home, and he probably has no use for the whole idea of home. These people split right down the middle into two neat categories. There are the ones who are running away from something and there are the ones who are looking for something that they just know has to be out there somewhere. They don't know exactly what it is that they're looking for. They only know that it isn't where they are, so the only way to get where it is is to travel. That's the way I am.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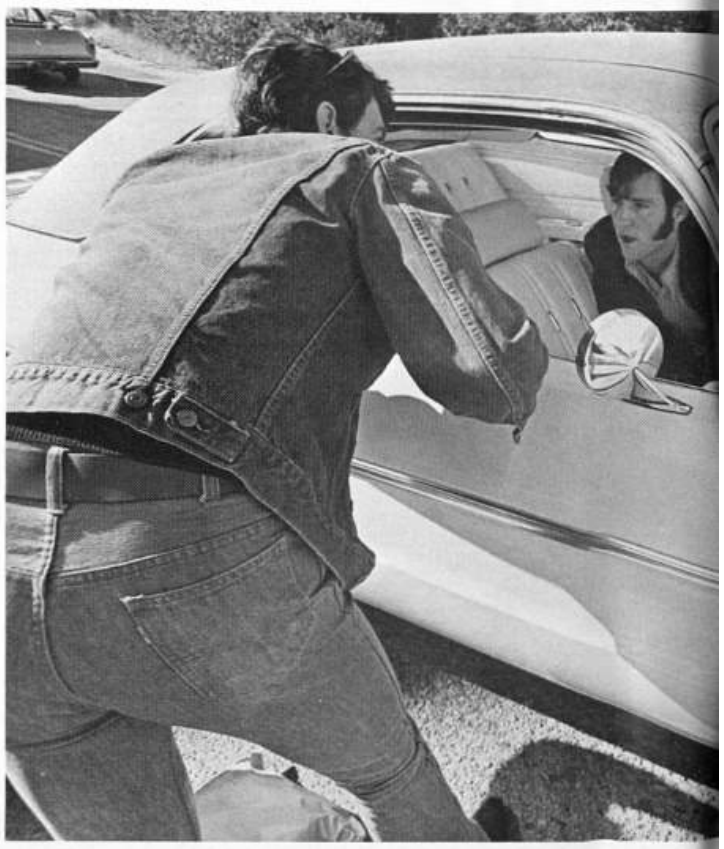

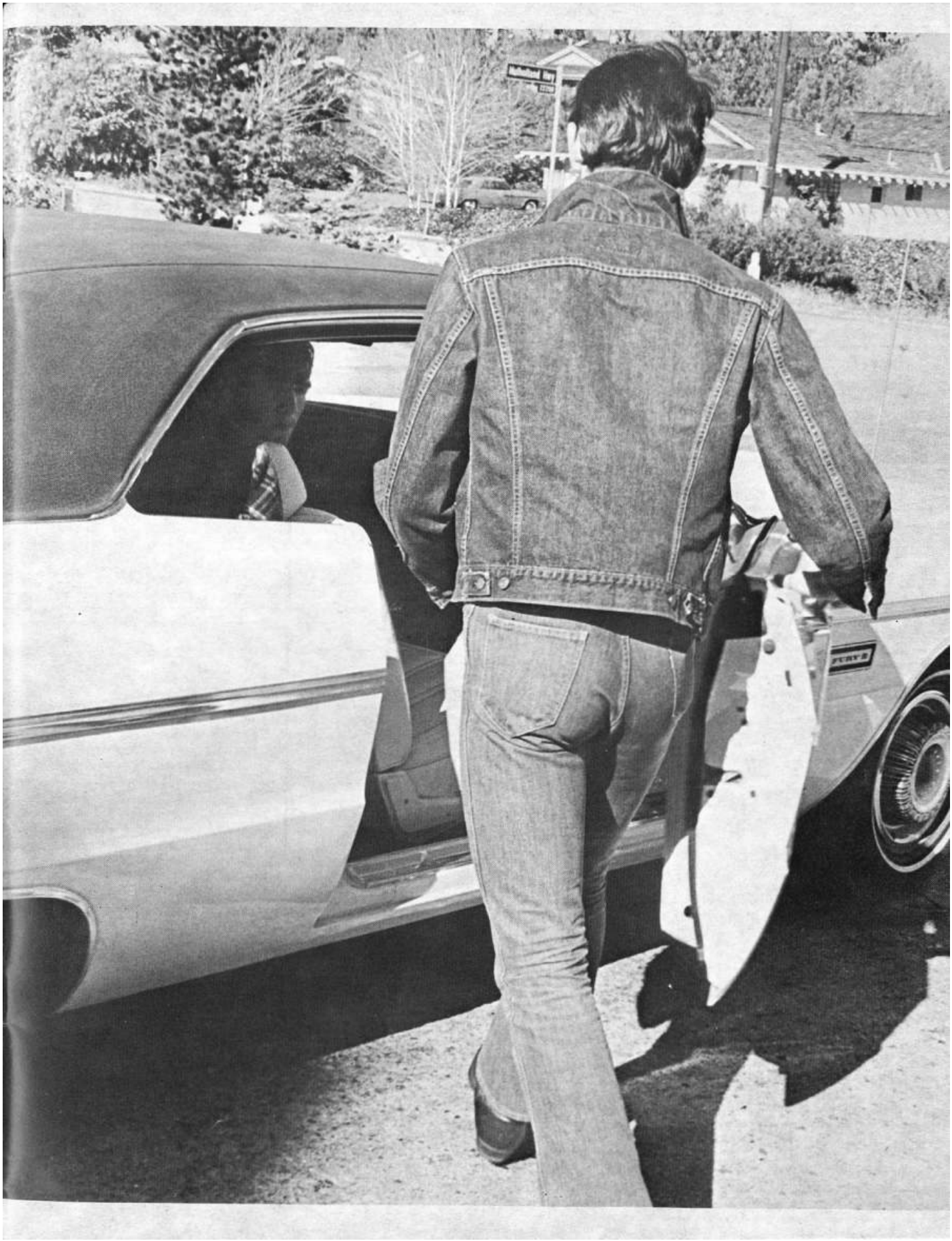

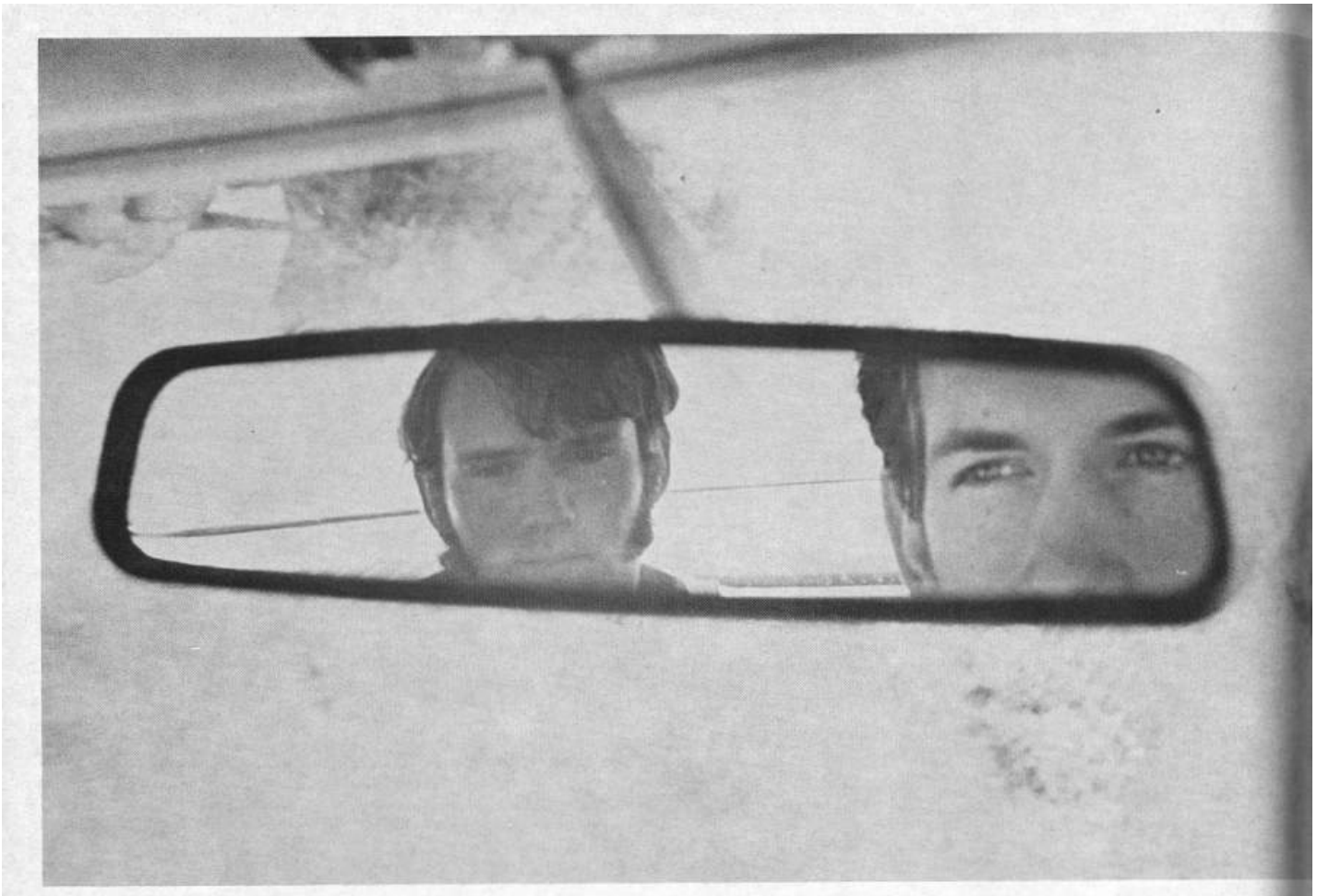

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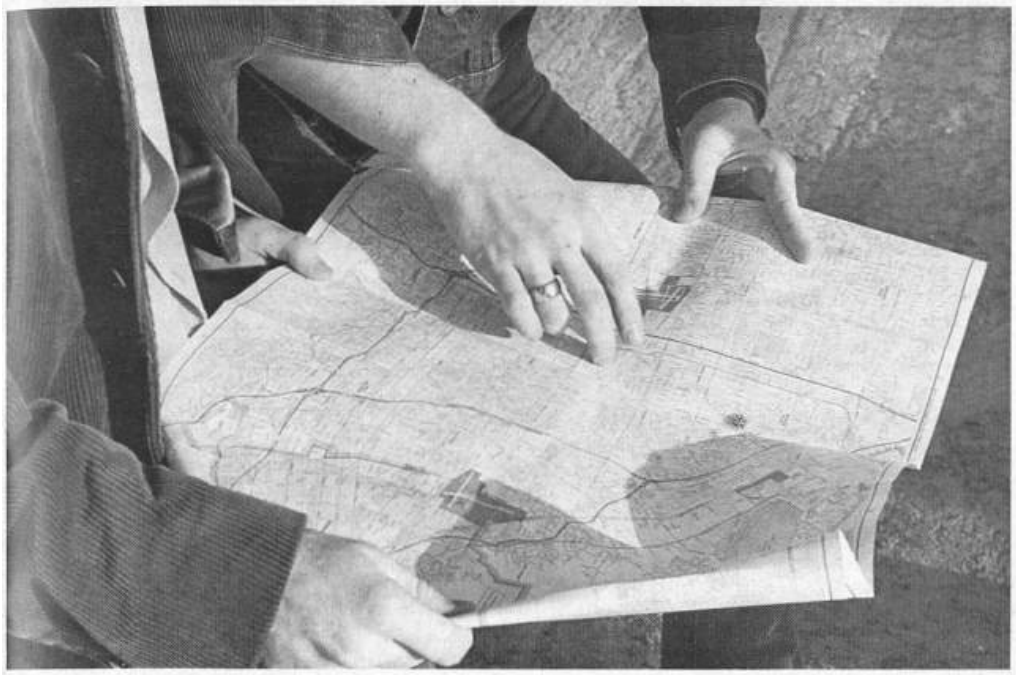
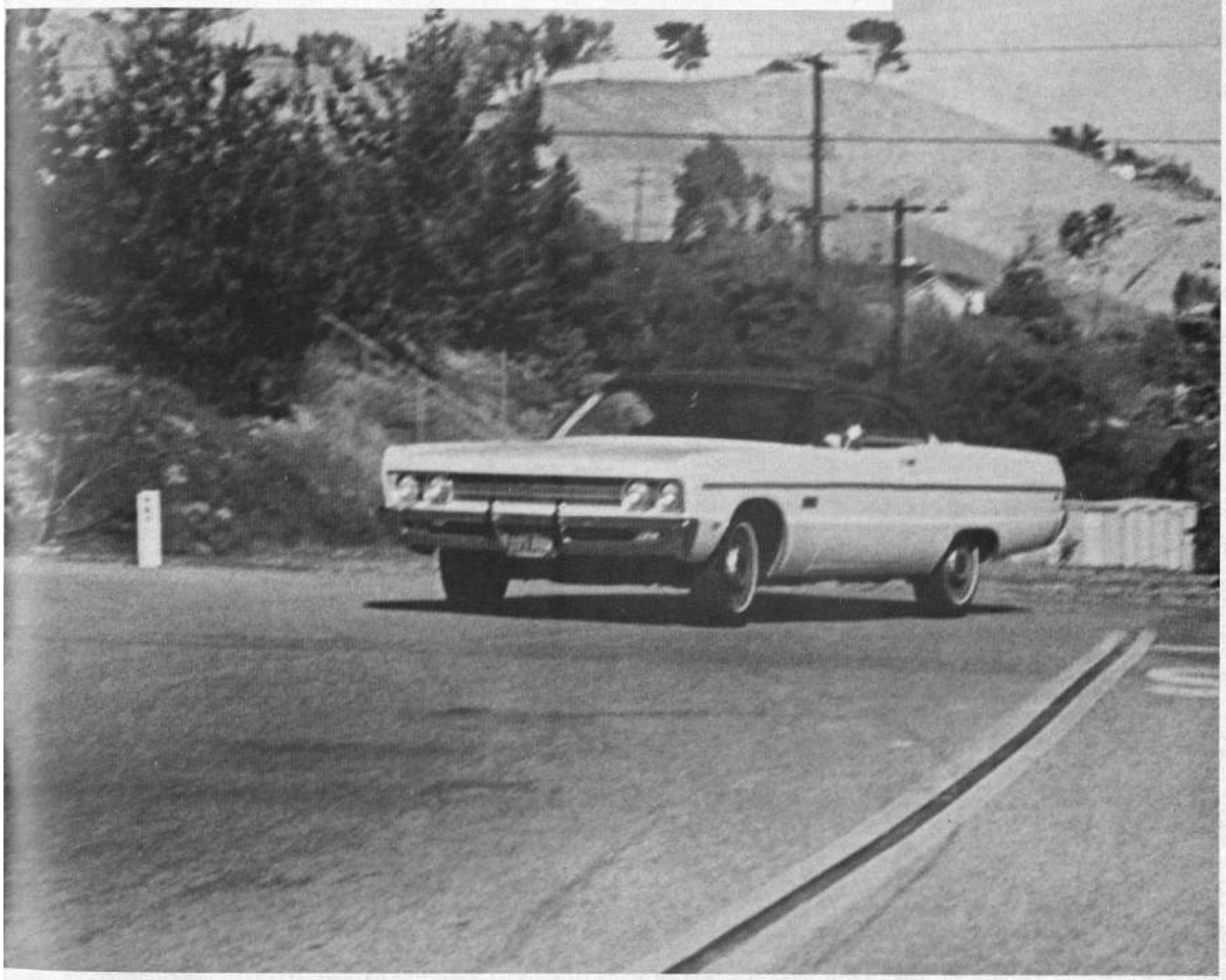
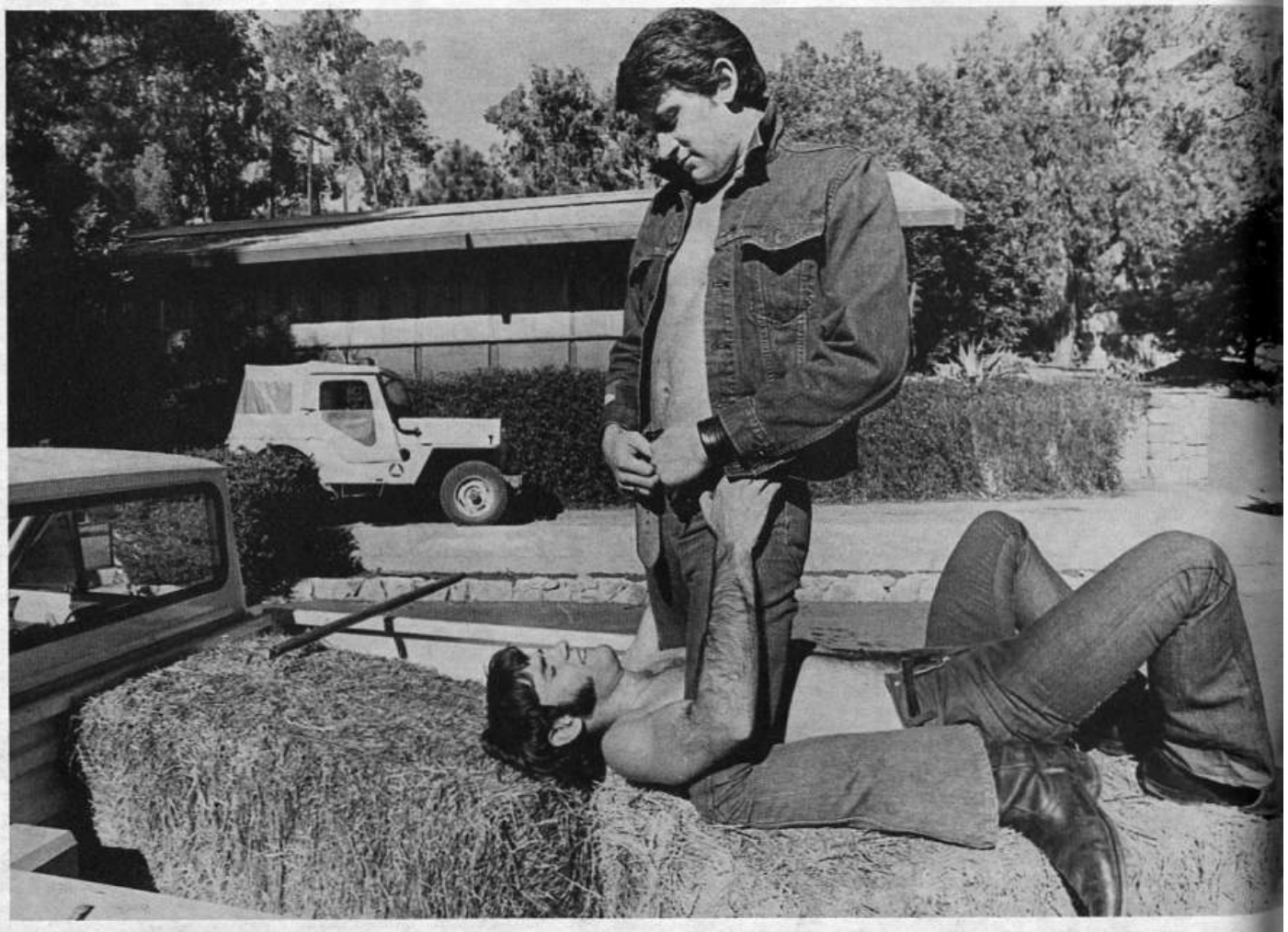
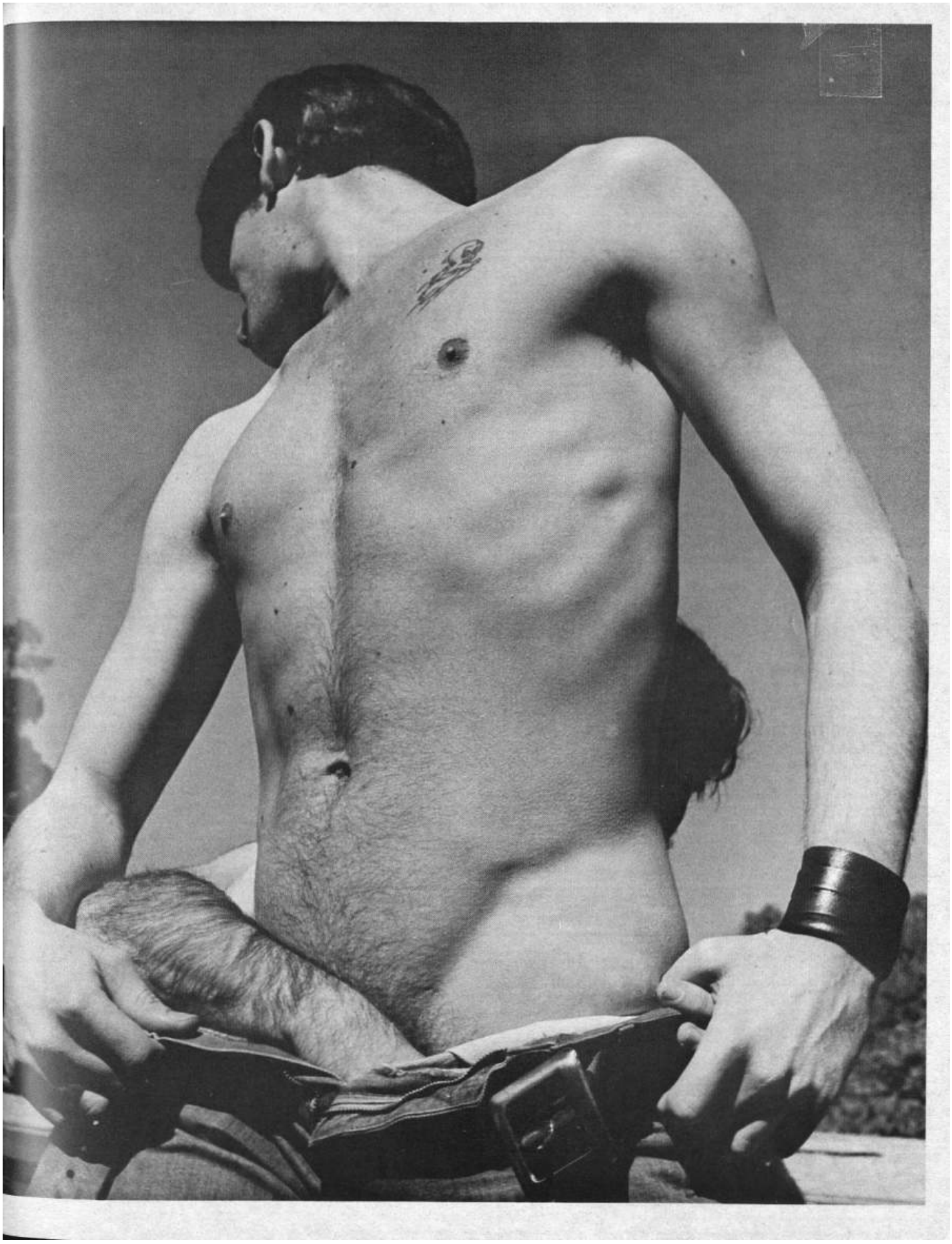
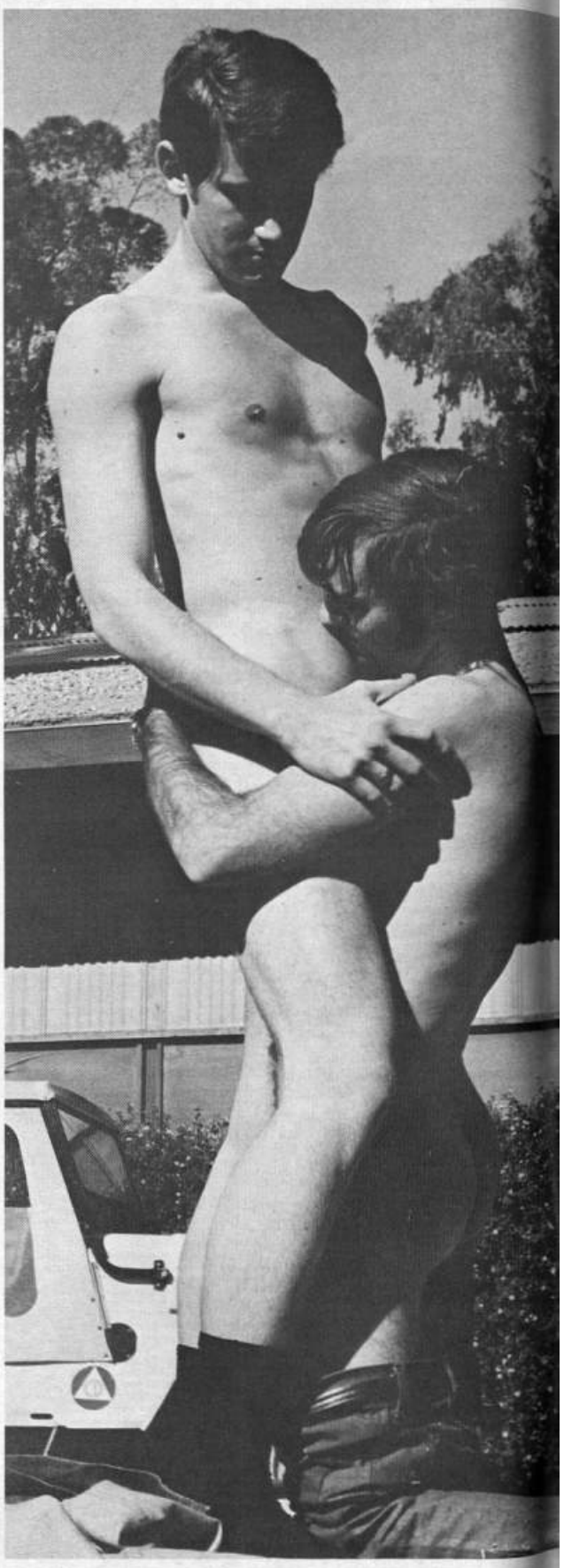
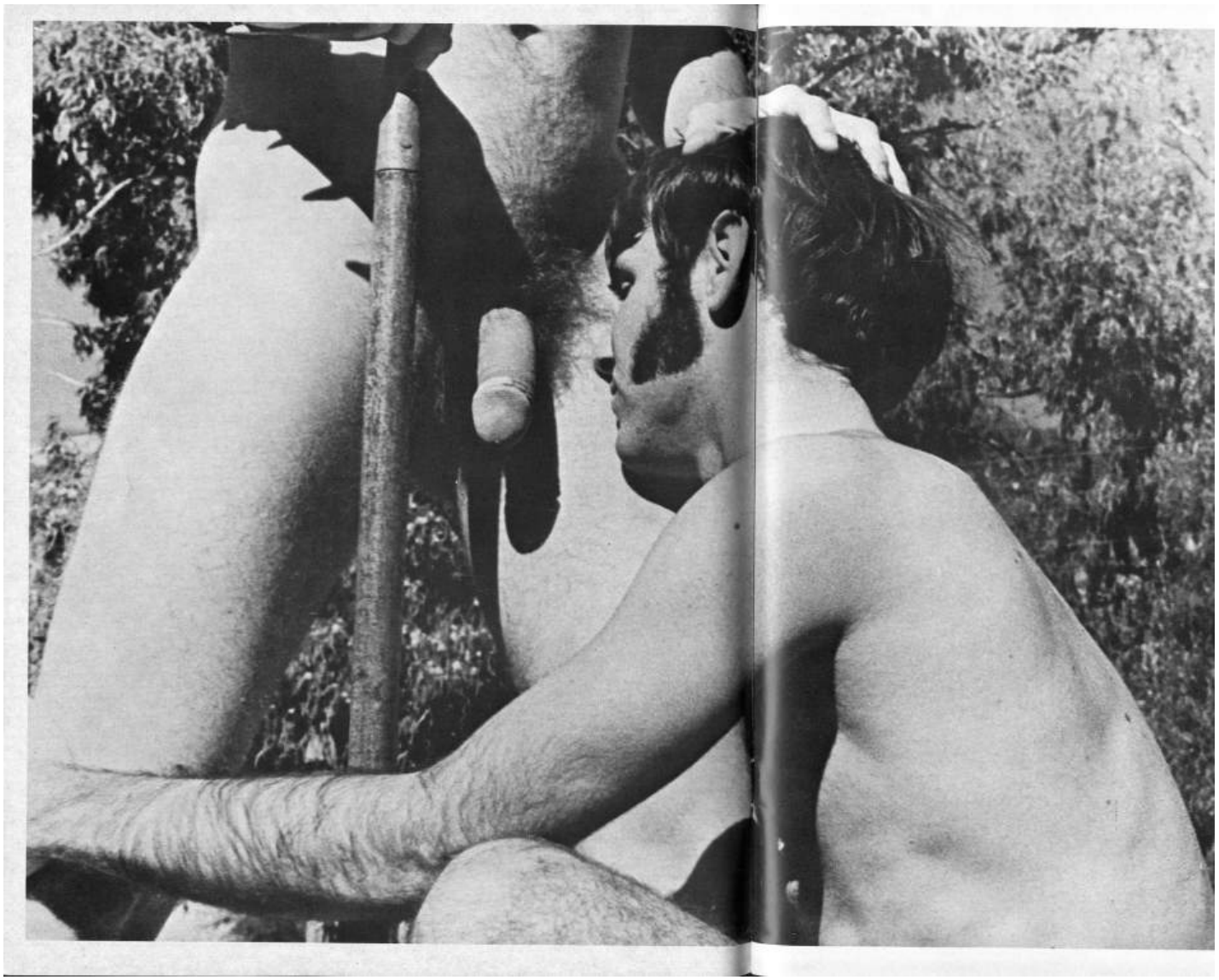


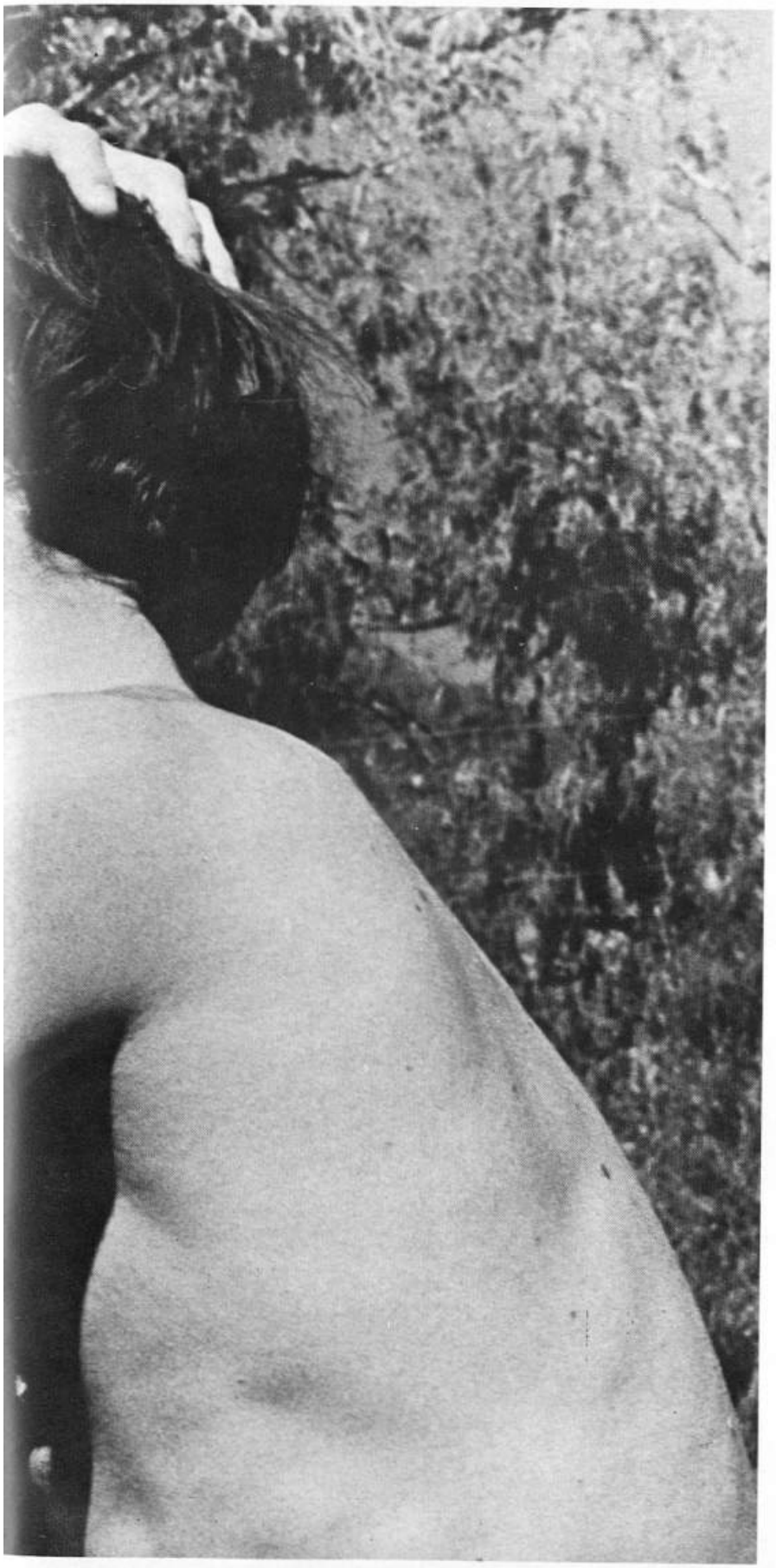




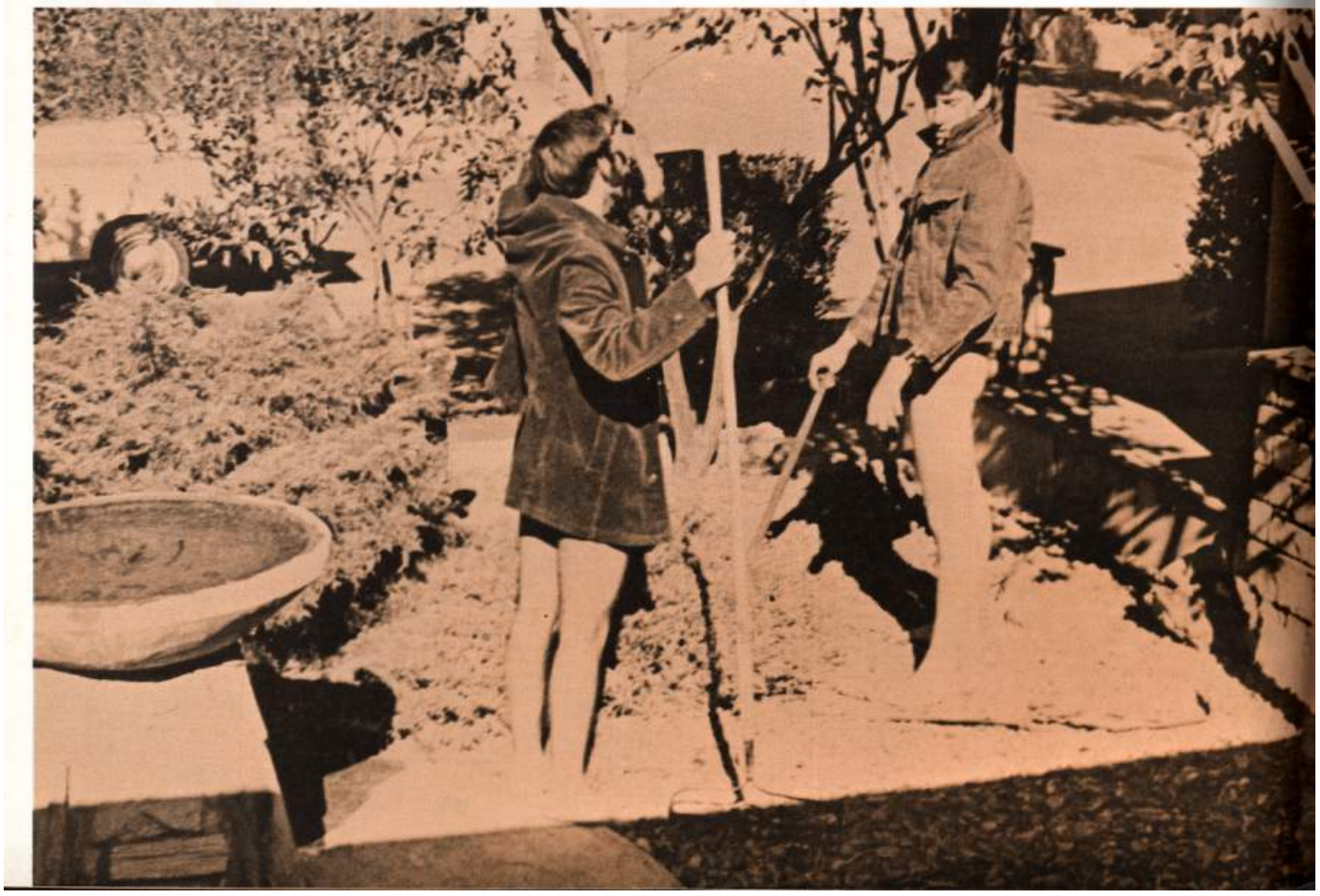


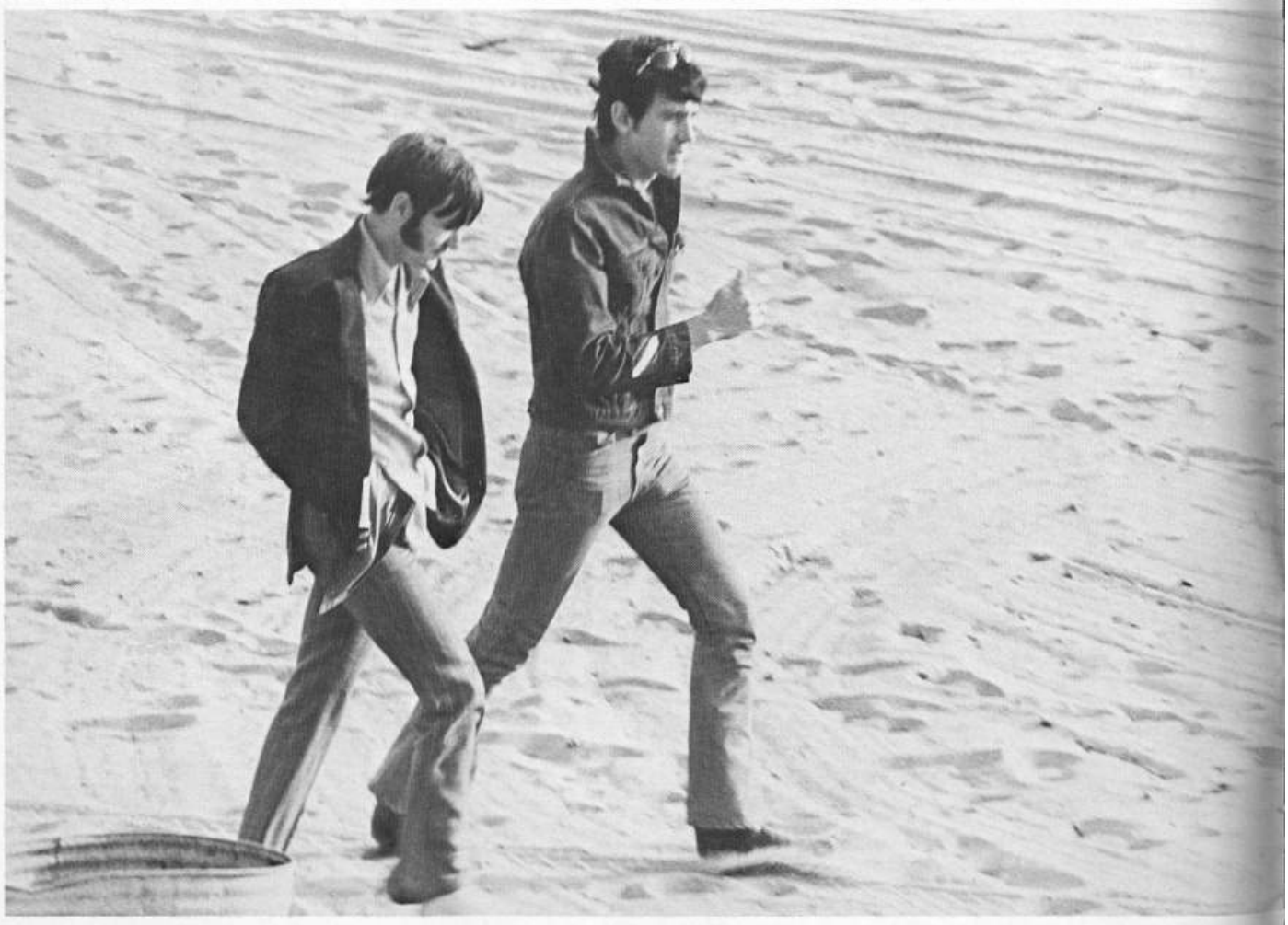


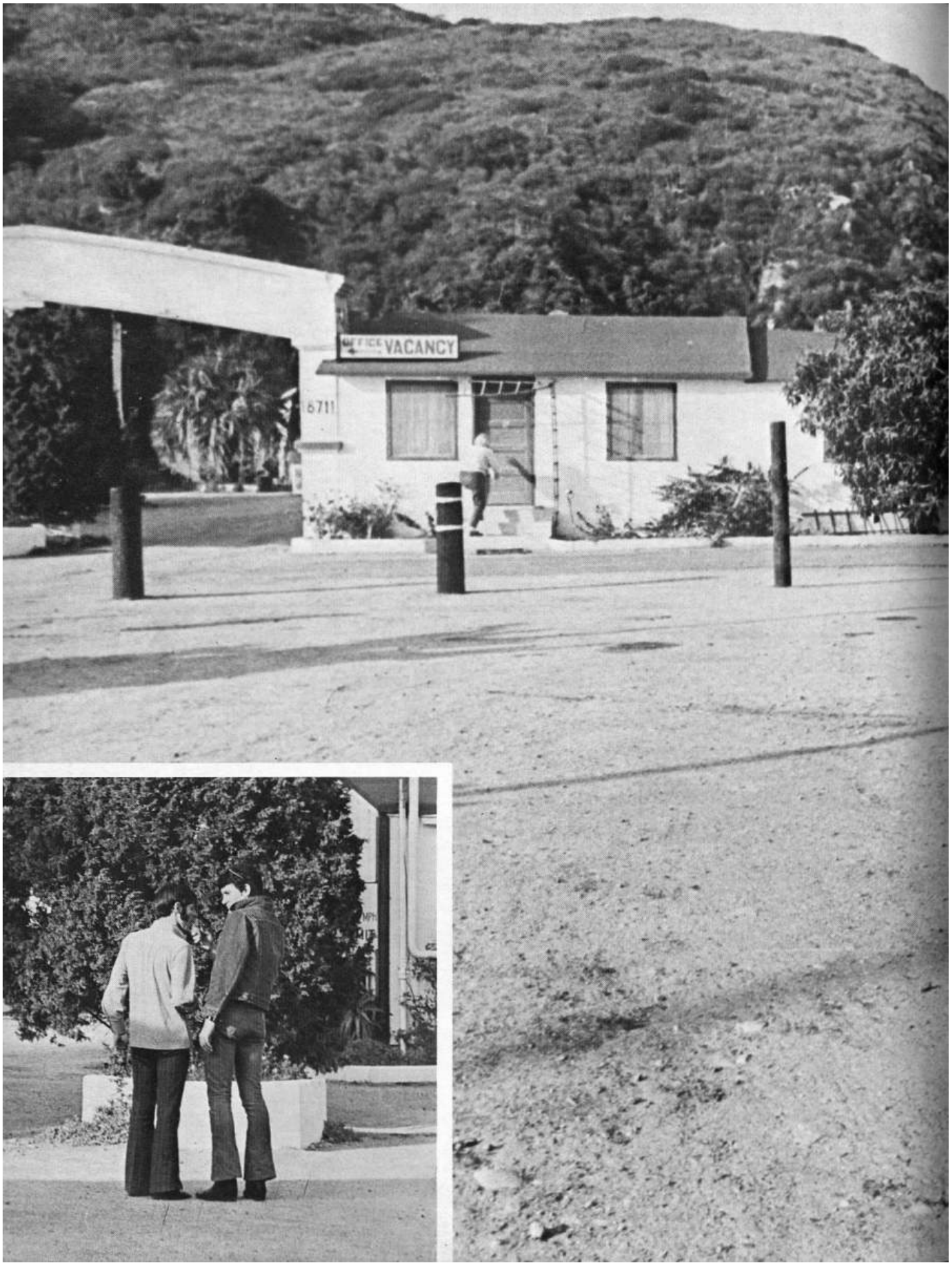




My name is Raymond Sanders. I guess that name sounds a little formal for a rambler, but I've never stayed in one place long enough to get a nickname—so I'm still Raymond Sanders just like my parents named me. Doesn't sound like a good name for a bum, does it? Well, I'm not a bum, and I never have been. It's funny how most people think that just because you don't like to stay for a long time in one place that you're some kind of a hobo. I guess what I really am is an adventurer. According to the books that I read when I was a kid, there have always been adventurers around the world. Only one day it struck me that there really weren't any in my day—at least not in my part of the country. I come from the Boston area, but now Boston's no more my home than any other town in the coun-



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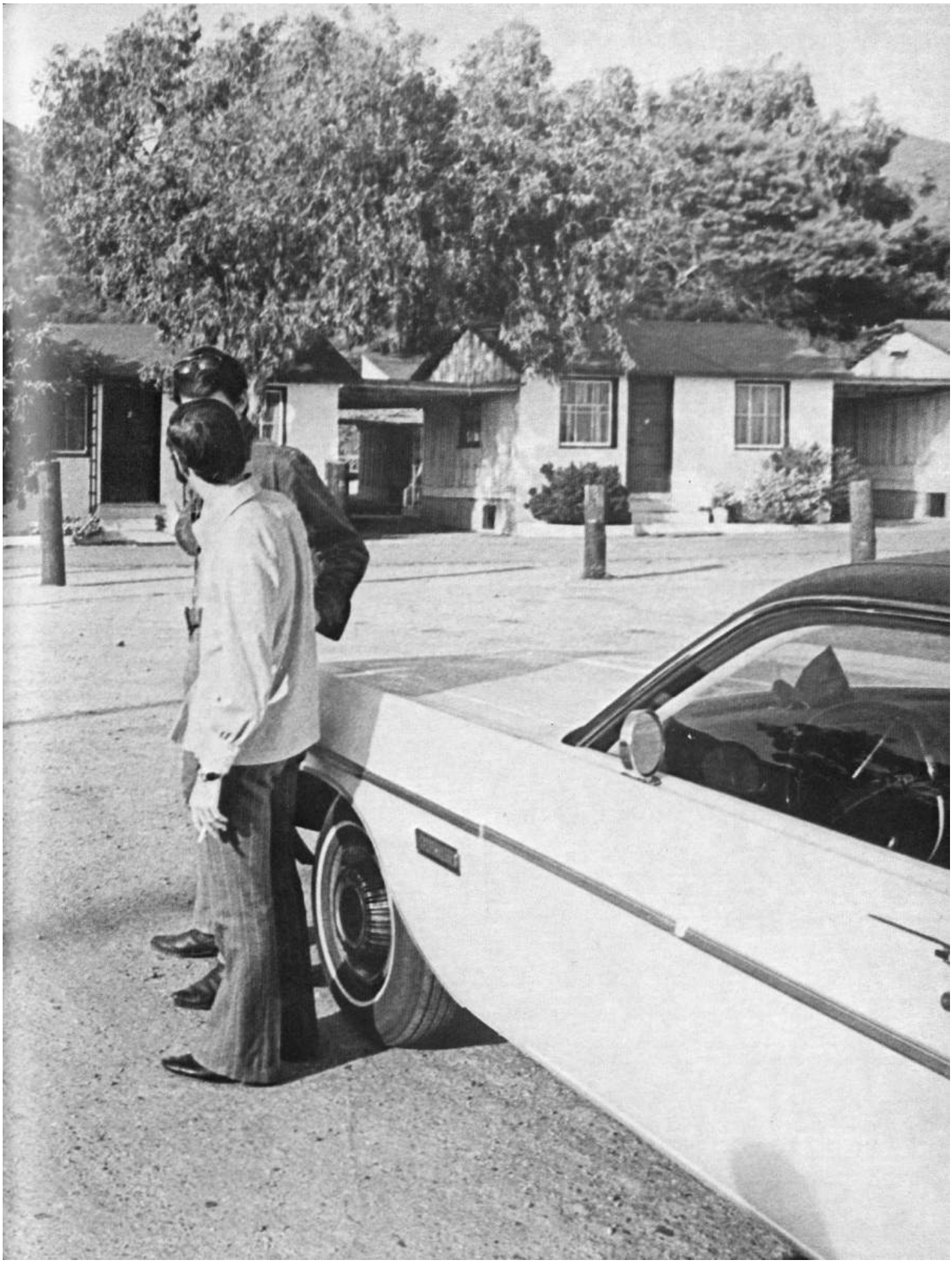
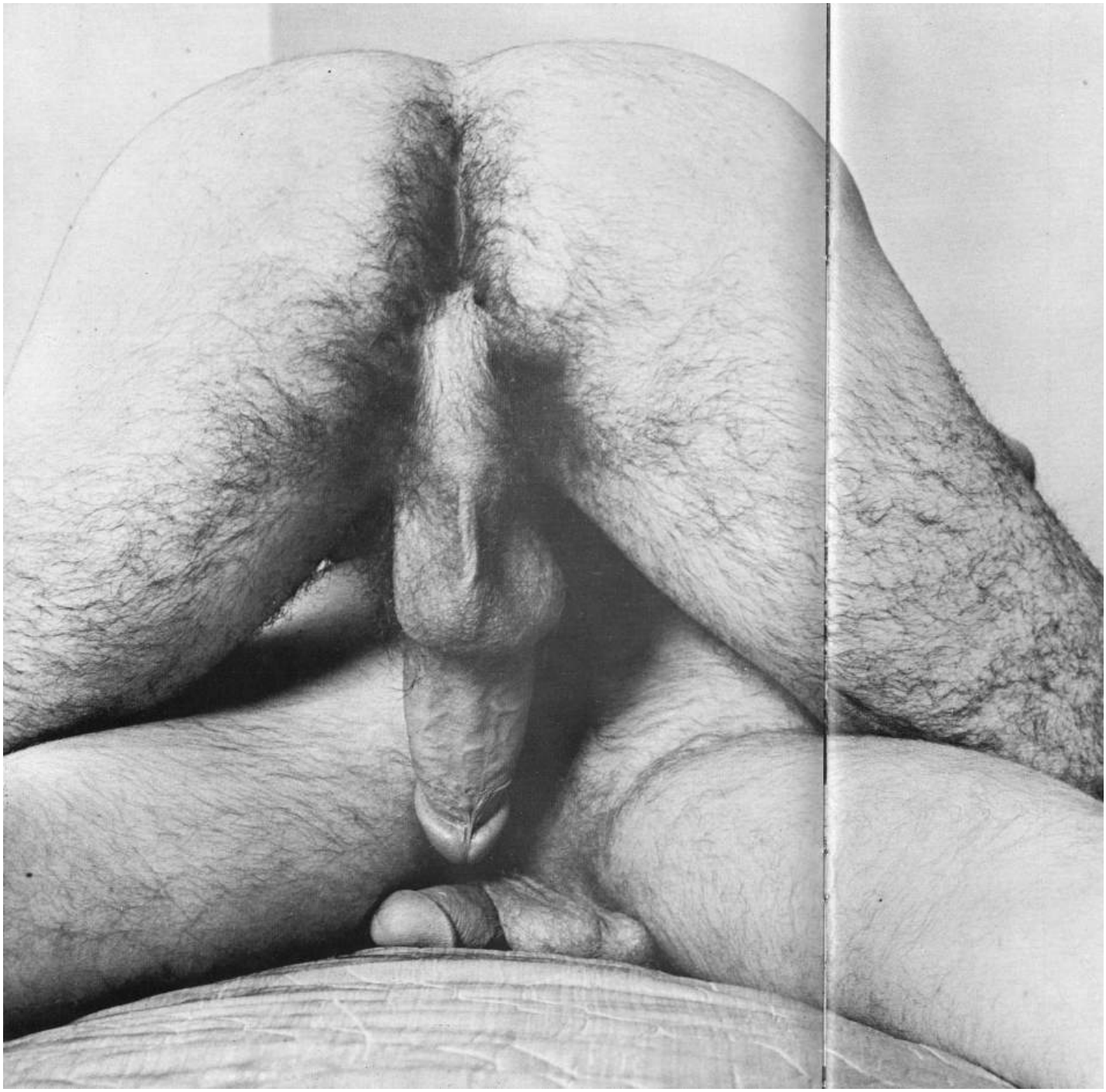


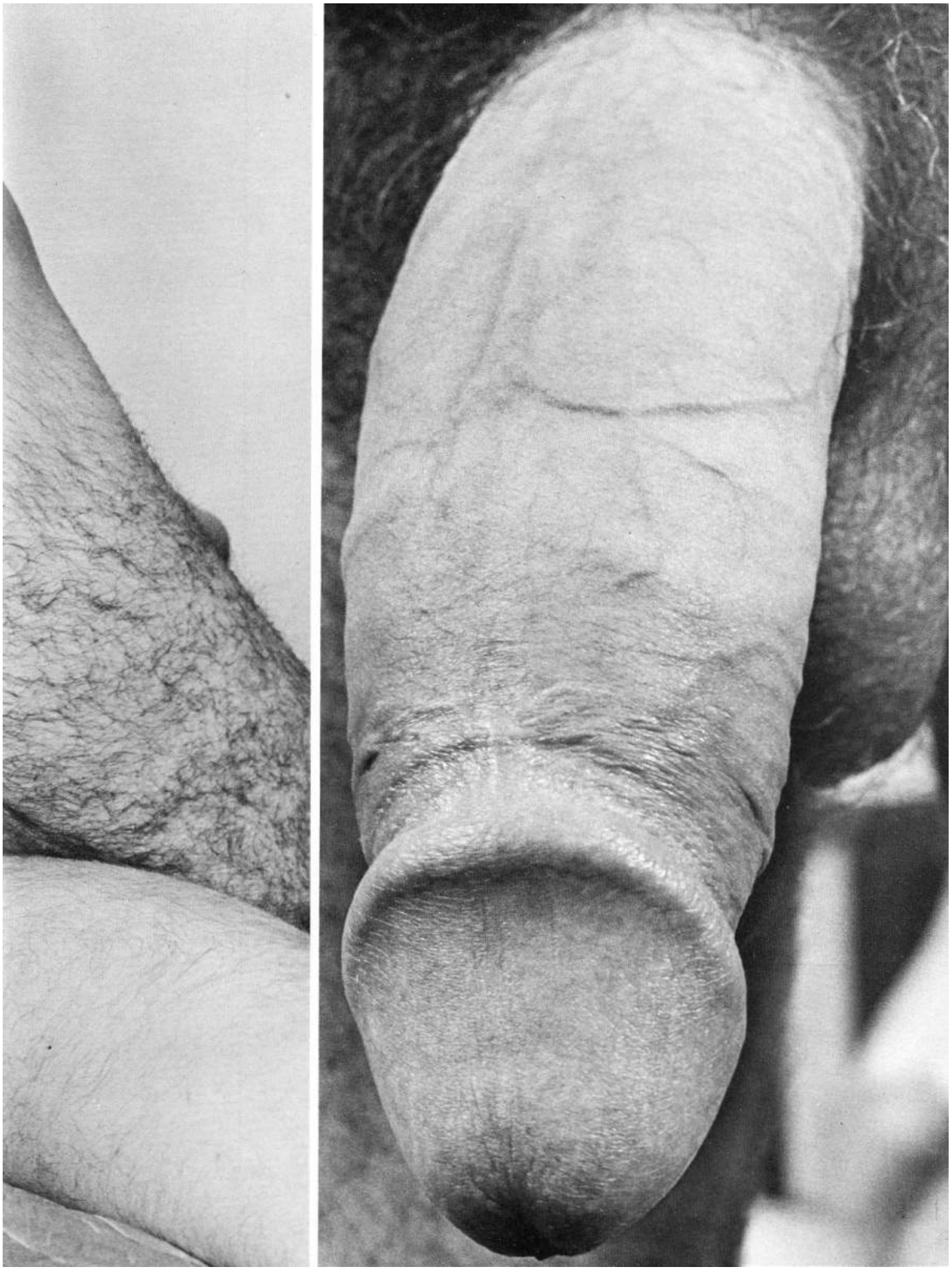
try. That's making an exception of Hawaii, of course, because you can't hitch-hike there.

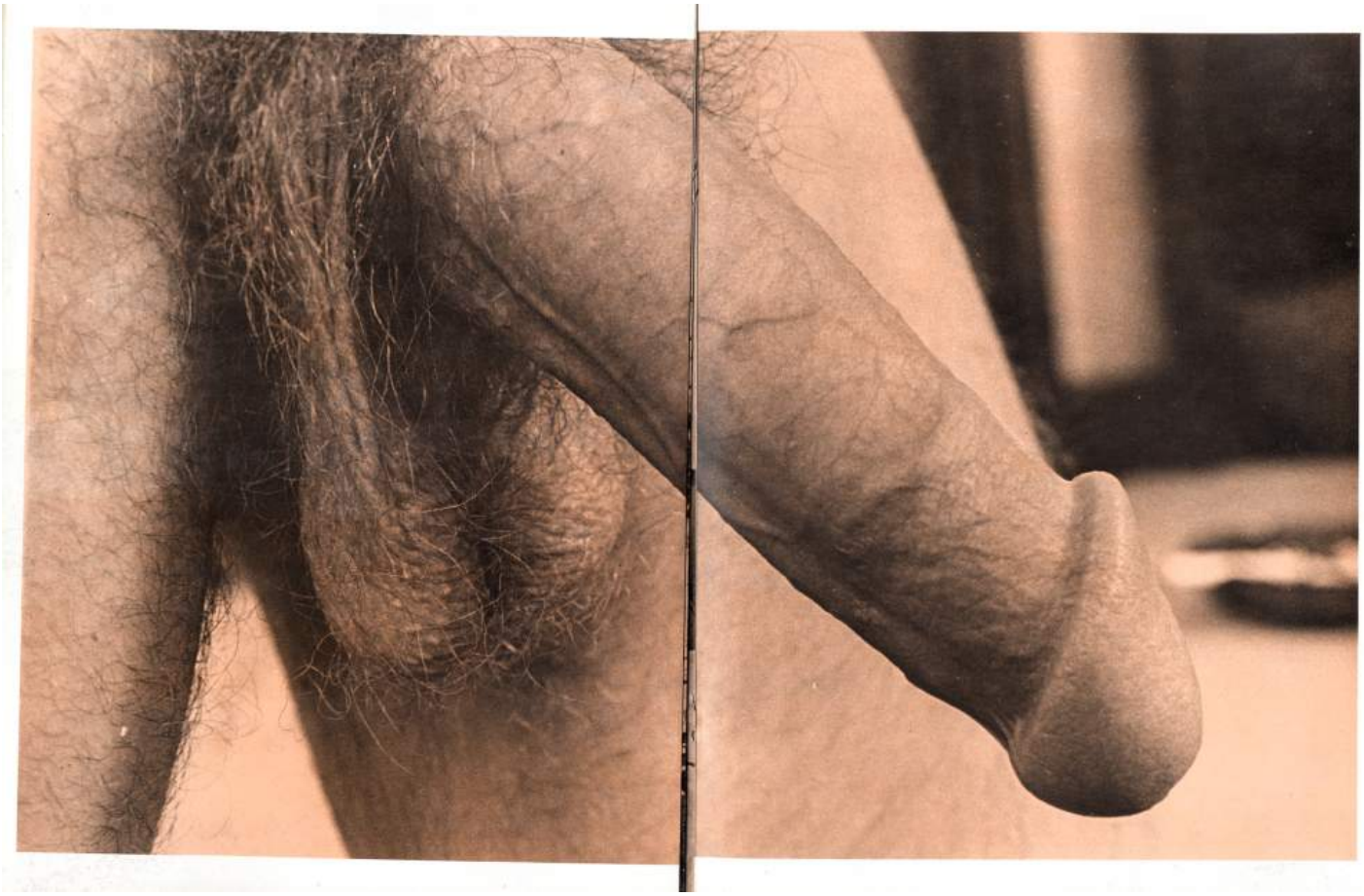
I used the word "rambler" to describe myself, but that doesn't carry the right connotation at all. I guess what I'm really like is a world traveler who only travels places where other people's cars are going already. I find work lots of places, so I'm not hard up for cash. I never have been. I've never been short of brains either, if that's what you're thinking. I don't know exactly what my I.Q. is, but that's because I never asked. I know that I'm a genius—a genius of a sort, at any rate. I finished high school at the age of fifteen. I graduated just four days after my fifteenth birthday, as a matter of fact. I guess that's pretty rare these days. Actually, it's not as implausible as it sounds. My father is a professor of classics at Harvard. He taught me a lot on the side. I could have gone to Harvard, but I decided that I'd had enough of that area.

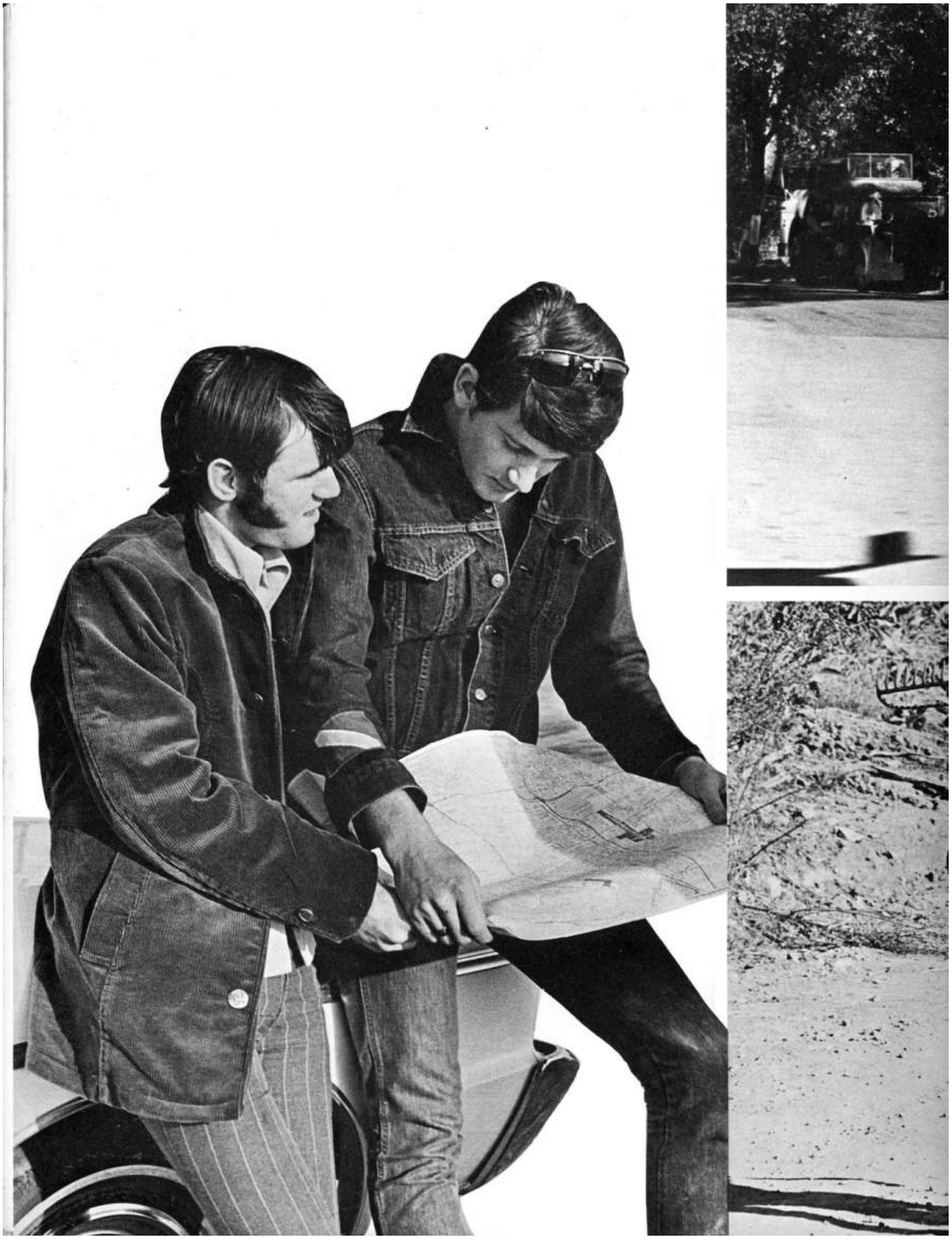
I went to college in Illinois and graduated three years later with a bachelors in history and a masters in philosophy at the same time. I suppose right now it sounds like I'm blowing my own horn as they say, but I'm just giving you the factual background so you'll be able to understand why it is that I live the way I do.

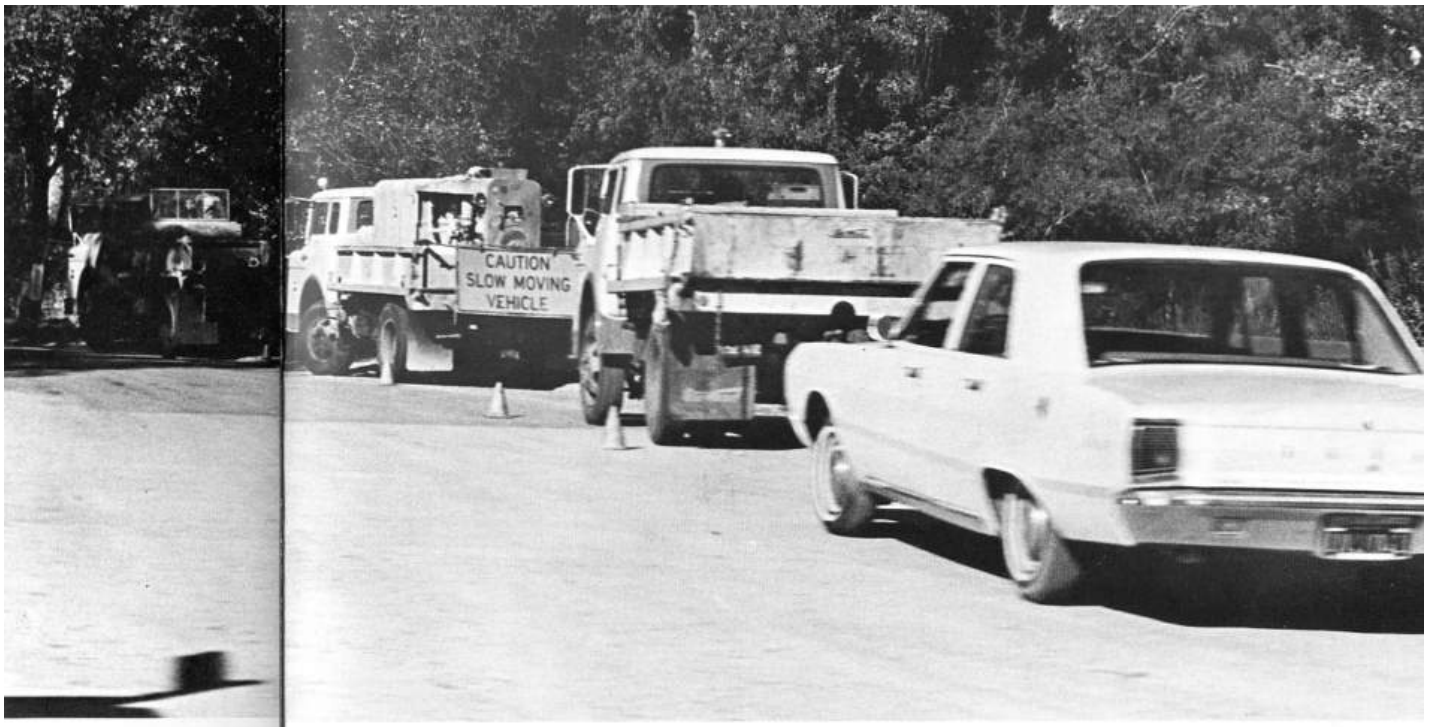
After college I went back to New England to teach freshman history at one of those small expensive girls' schools where all the students are rich and none of them are too terribly bright. It was more of a drag than I could stand. You've got to remember that Some of my students were older than I was. Sexually I was still a virgin, and I knew damn well that, regardless of what these girls' parents thought, a good third of *them* weren't. I learned fast though. I guess I learned so fast that I really didn't appreciate what I had going for me. I split after one year, and gravitated to New York to try out acting.

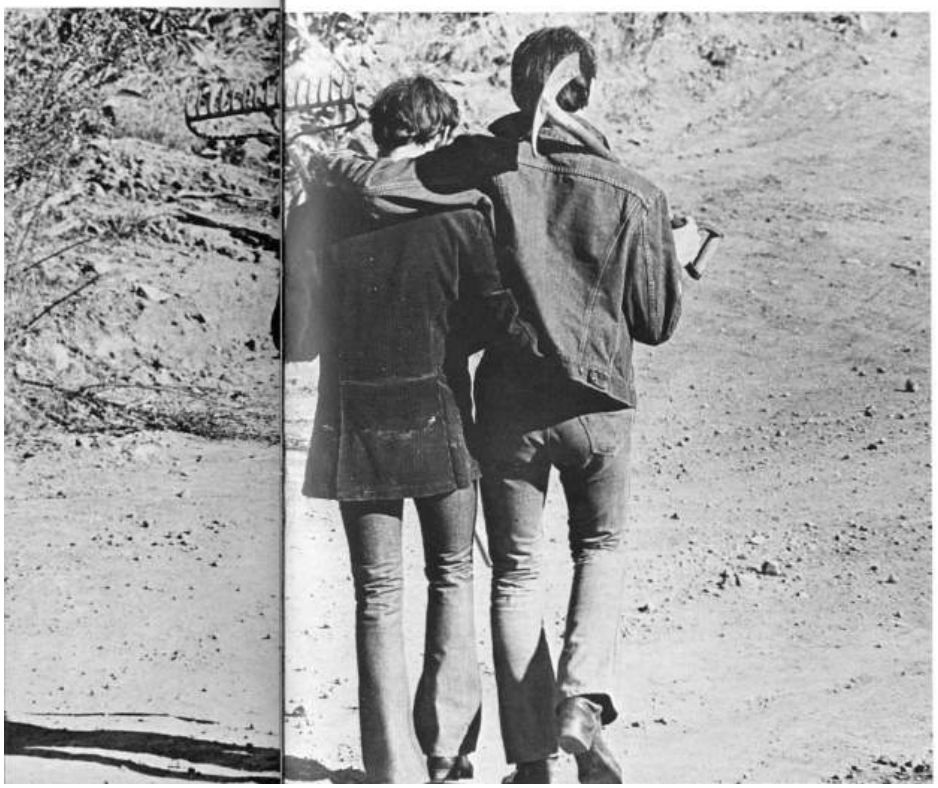












It was about five months later that I began to realize two things. One was that New York wasn't my scene. Even if you know all about it and try to fight it all the way, New York has a dehumanizing effect on people. You just can't help it. Bit by bit you begin to fit into the big machine. You start to become a part of that machine and your identity is no longer what it was before.

Acting wasn't exactly lining my pockets with gold, so I started taking small jobs back stage. I picked up the basics of lighting and carpentry, and managed to get into the Teamsters by means of some connections I'd made. At first I was only making small hauls around the city. It was murder. Then one night, one of the guys I'd met in the theatre said he had a cross-country trucking job and he couldn't take care of it himself. I took it on for him and that's when I fell in love with the highway.

Oh, I didn't tell you about the second thing I learned in New

CATERPILLAR

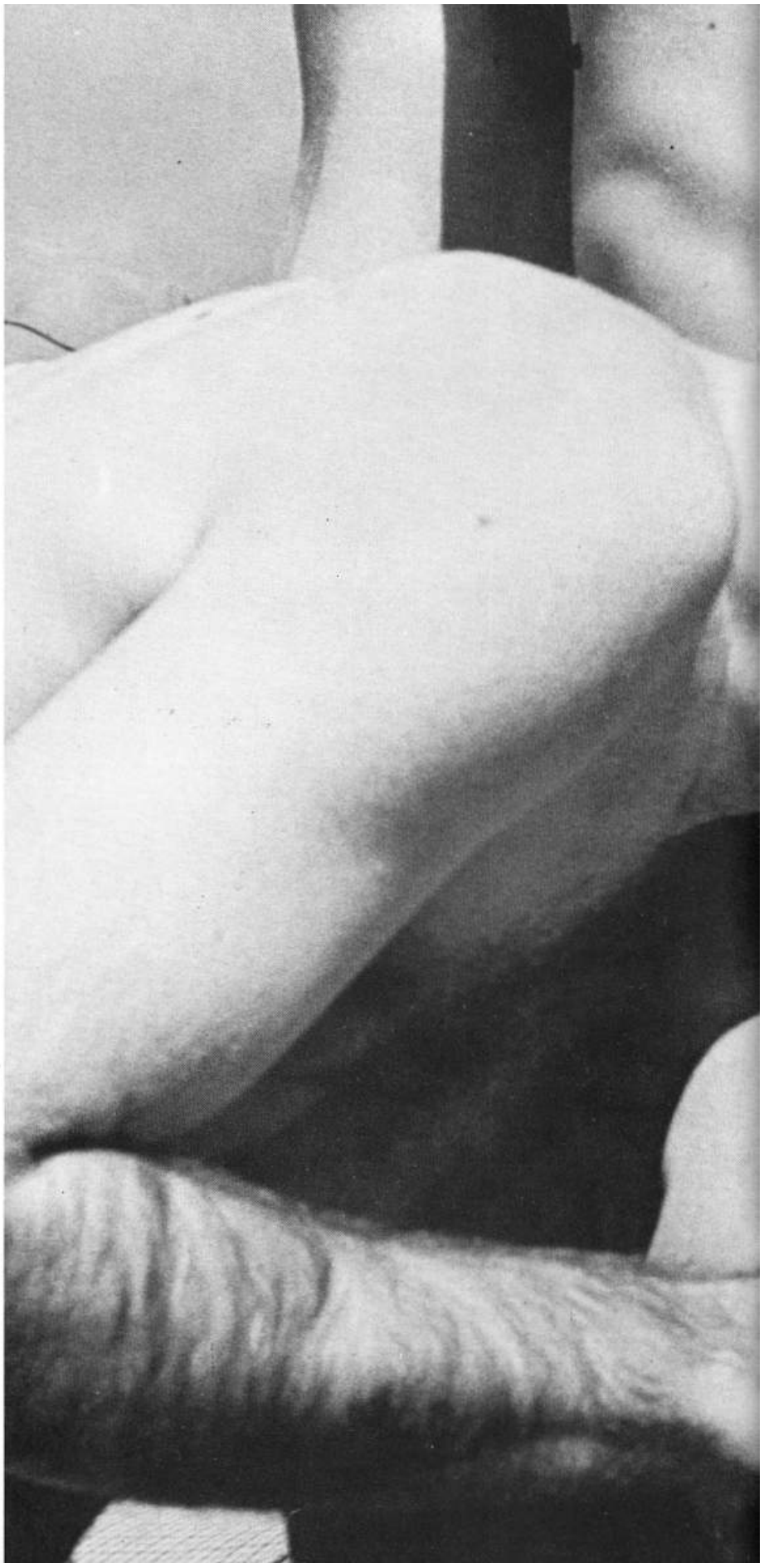
York. I learned I was gay. I don't mean I decided to be gay, or that somebody convinced me. I just discovered that I was born to be a homosexual. It didn't shake me up or anything. I knew I could handle it. I got into a couple of hairy situations at first, but then I learned how to handle myself, and things were all right.

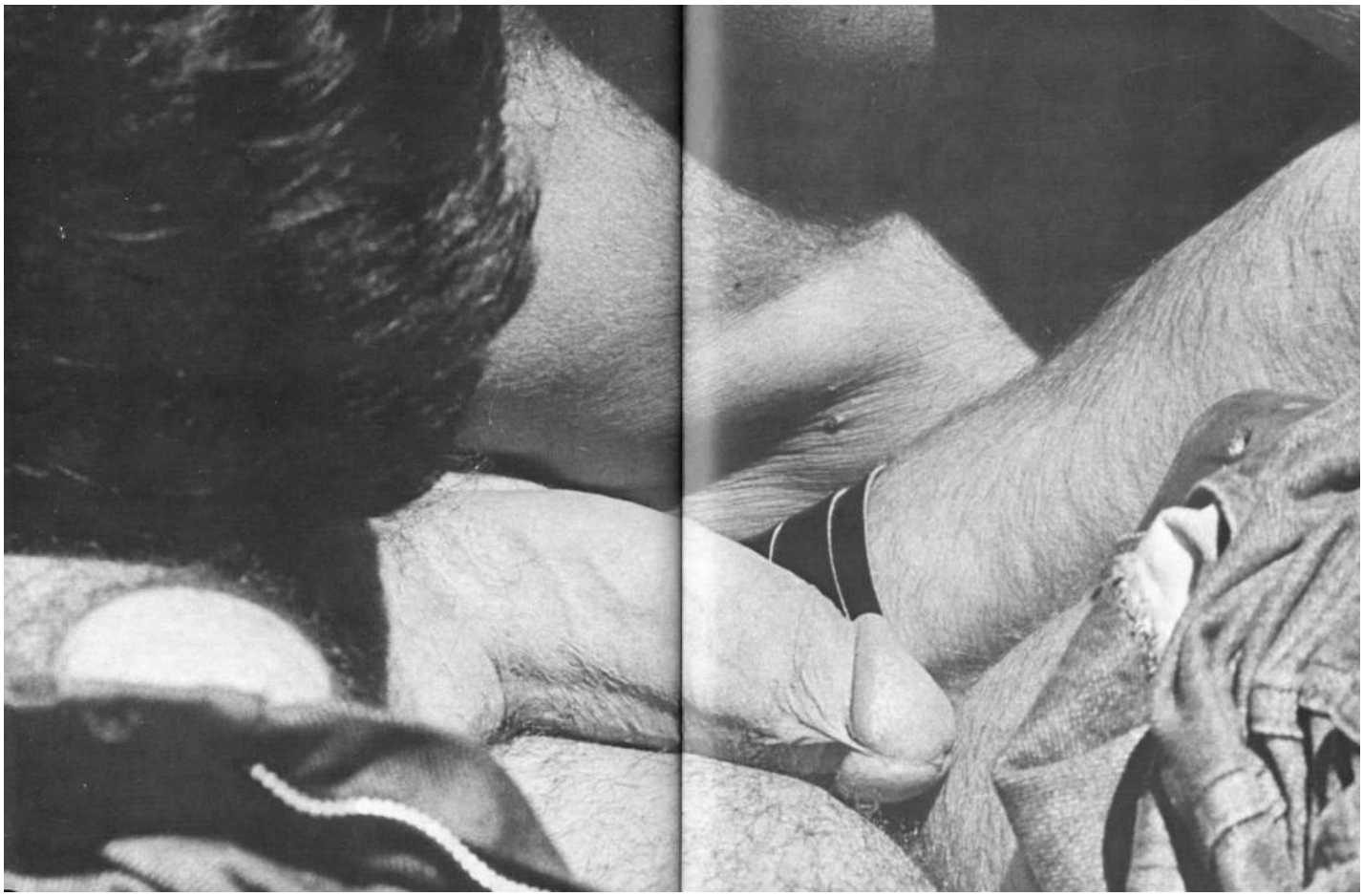
Anyway, that night when I came back from the cross-country run, I knew I had some thinking to do, so I sat down with four quarts of cold ale and put my brain into gear. I had just finished a painful experience with an actor who I'd been rooming with. There was really no reason to stay in the city on that account. I was getting tired with New York in general, and this de-personalization thing was really starting to frighten me. But that wasn't the big thing. What was really bothering me was that I had always expected there to be some excitement in the world. I guess it came from the stories my dad used to tell me and read to me when I was a kid. I was just about brought up on Homer. When I was ten I'd read the Illiad and the Odyssey in translation and my bedtime stories came from Bullfinch and Edith Hamilton.

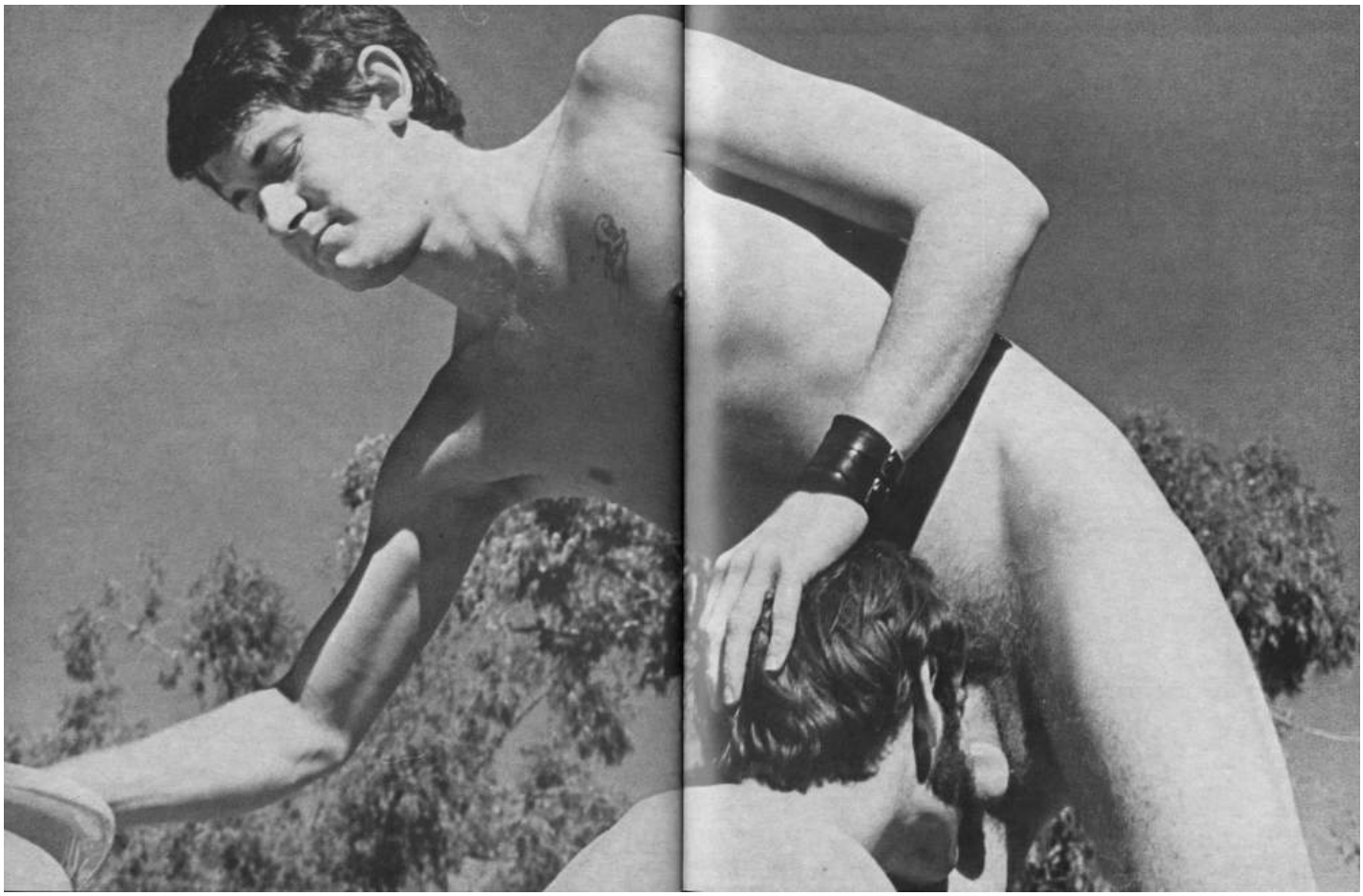
You might not be familiar with this kind of stuff, but if you are, you know that life is supposed to be an adventure.

I sat there for hours with that ale and those thoughts. I guess I finally fell asleep about dawn. When I woke up I knew that somewhere out on that highway I had felt something. No, I hadn't seen the excitement the adventure I was looking for. But something out there had reminded me that it did exist. The next morning I sold off my books and furniture, smiled at four empty green ale bottles, and hitched a ride out of town.

Like I said, there's adventure on the road. Some of it comes from meeting other people and getting tangled up in their lives for a while, and some of it you make





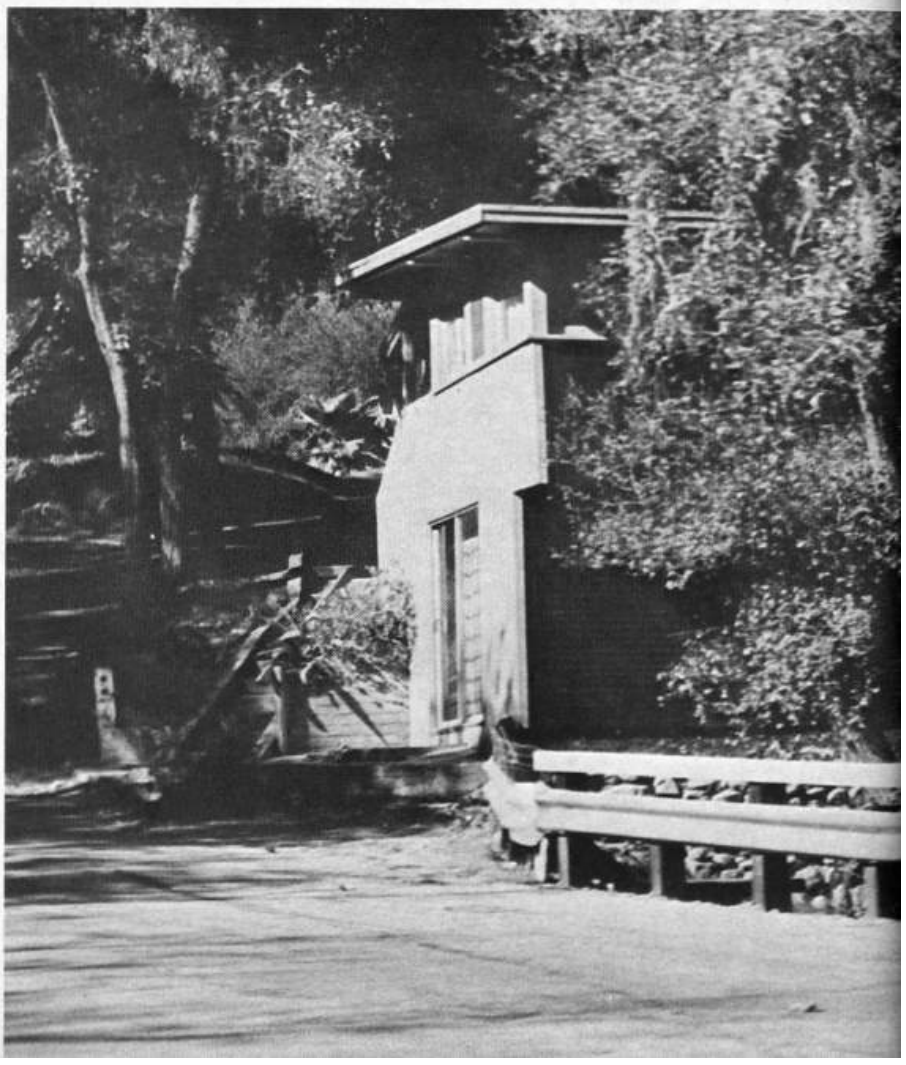


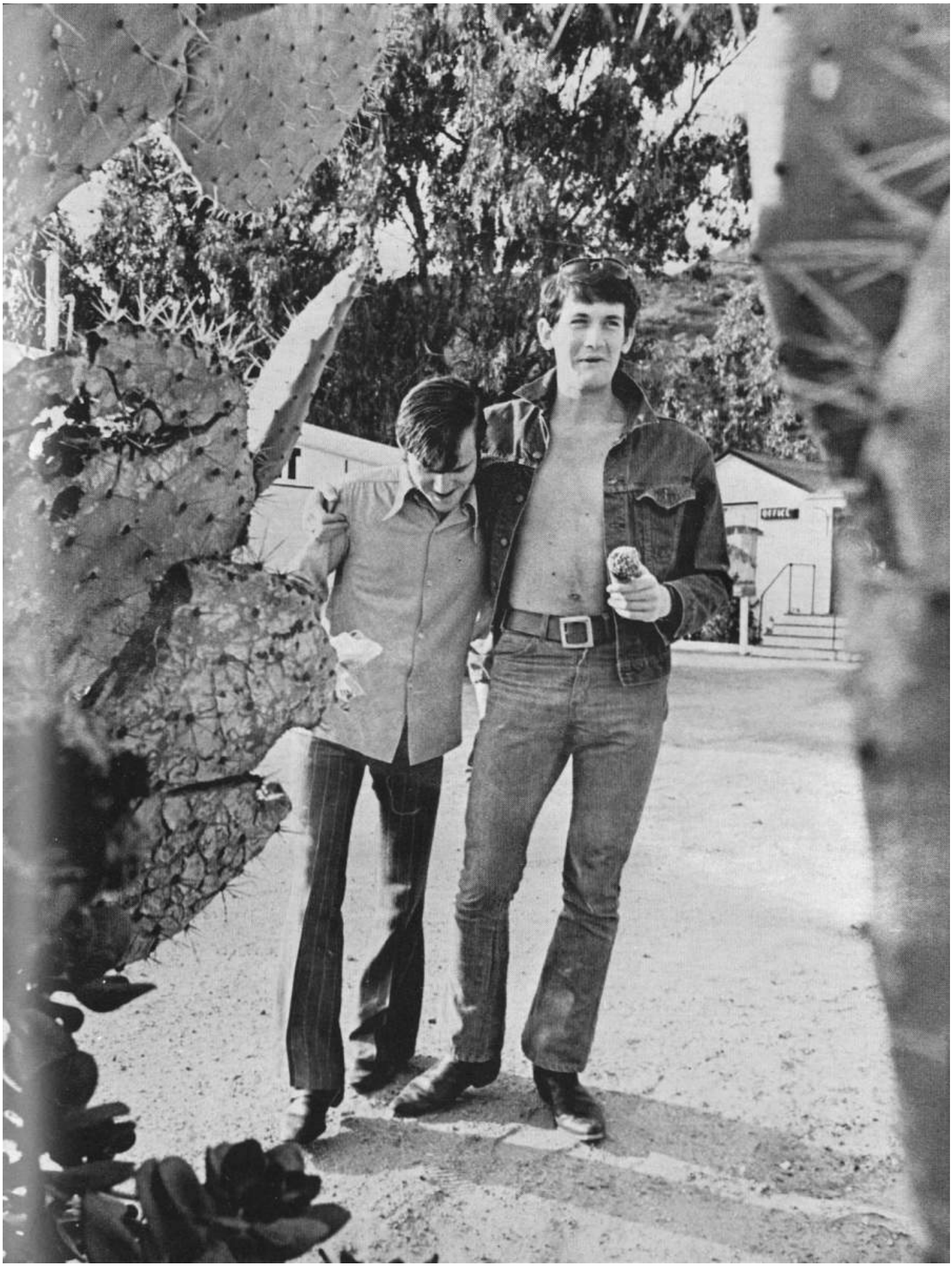
yourself. I tried to explain that to a guy who picked me up on the Pennsylvania Turnpike once. He was all gray. It was a gray day. He was wearing a gray suit. He had gray eyes and gray hair and he was some kind of business man. He didn't explain it too well.

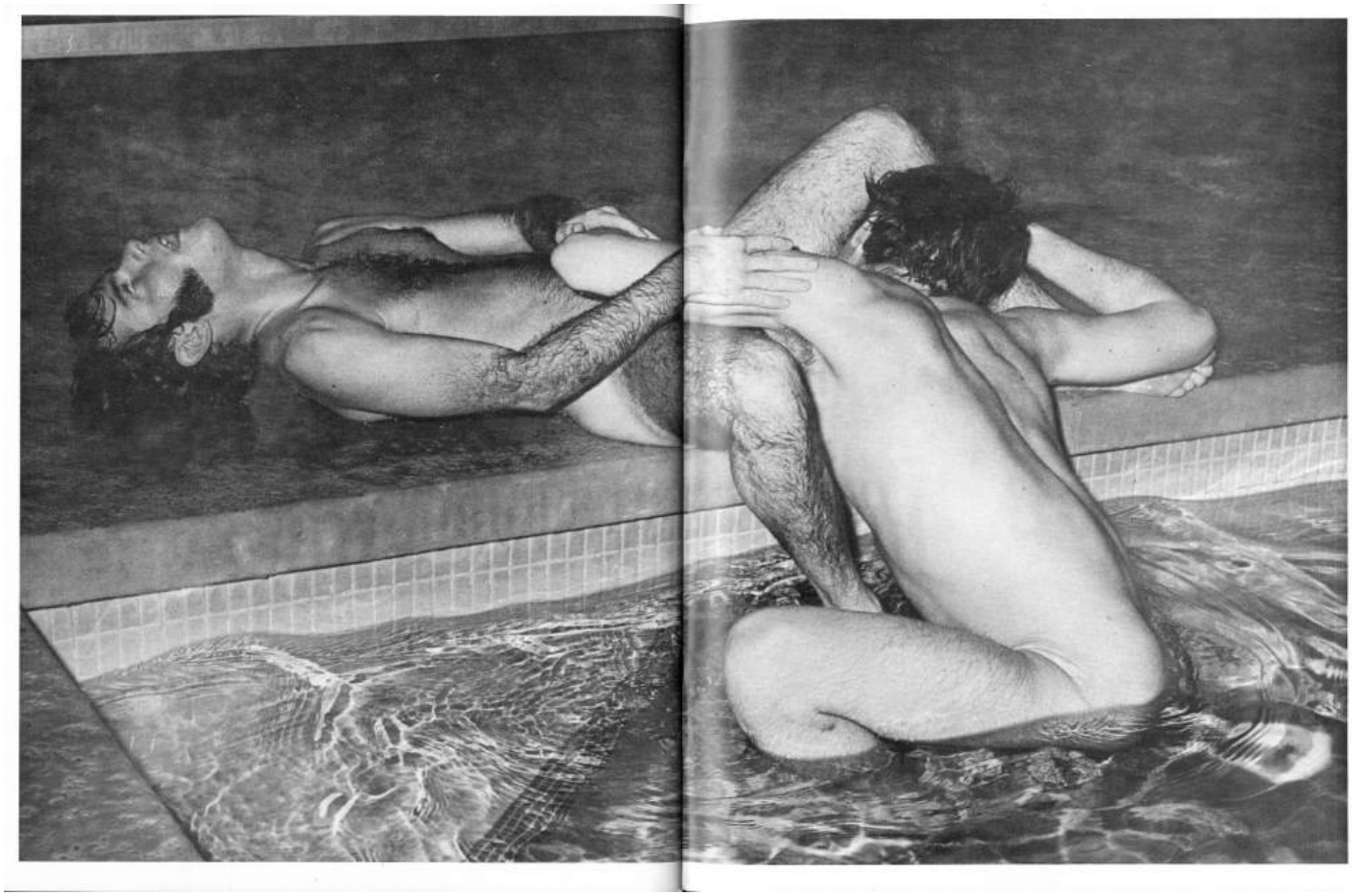
I did my best to explain what I thought I was doing. I guess he was glad to have somebody talking to him, but I could tell by the look on his face that he really didn't understand what I was saying. He finally gave me a tolerant kind of condescending smile and said, "So you think you can make the world turn the way you want it to?"

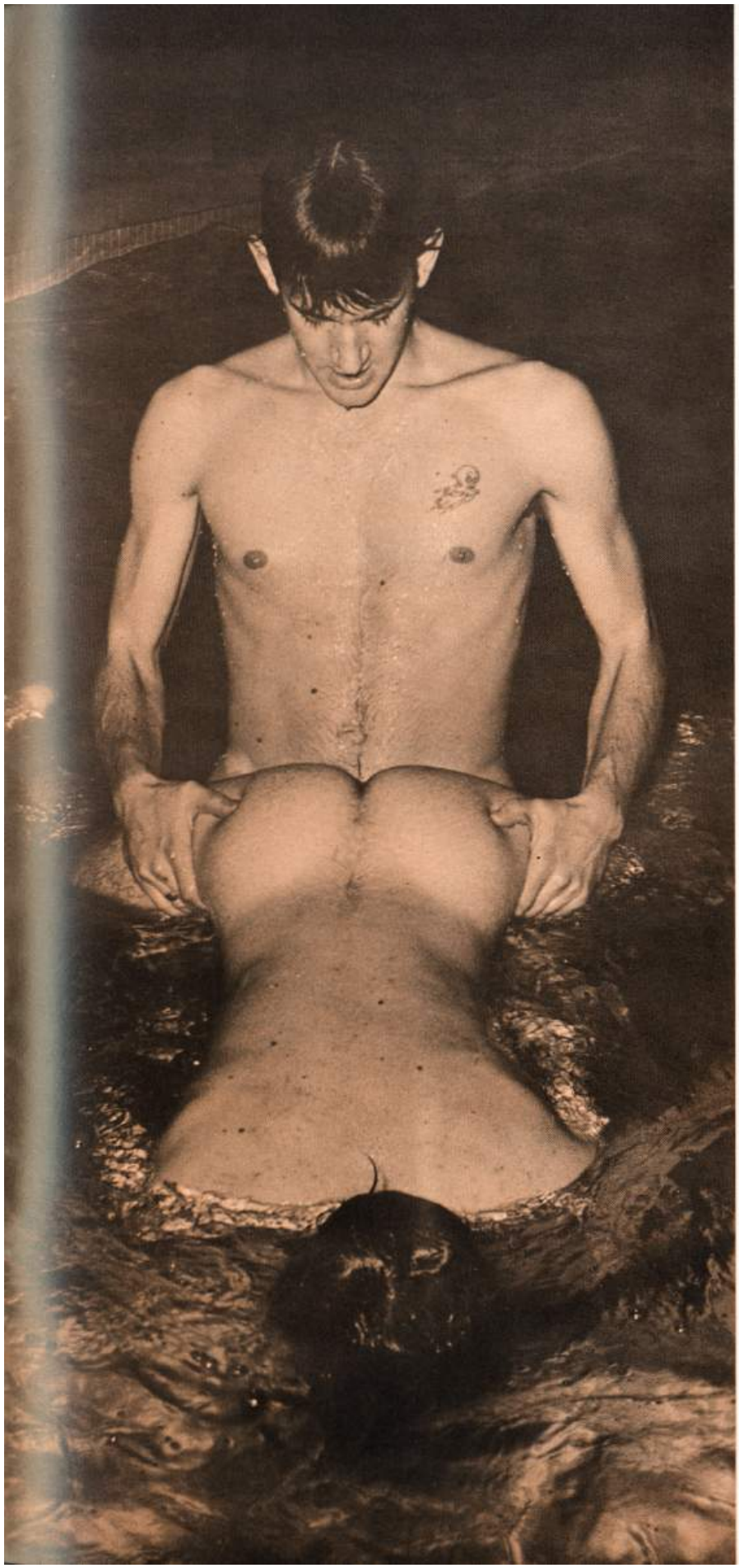
I didn't answer right away. Maybe that was what I was trying to do. So what's wrong with that. Maybe if more people *were* trying to do something with the world and fewer people were just content to sit and let the world turn them, there would be more happy faces. I figure that even if you're losing, it's more fun to be trying for something than just waiting for something to happen to you.

That's why I live this kind of life. I don't starve. I don't live off anybody else's tax money. And





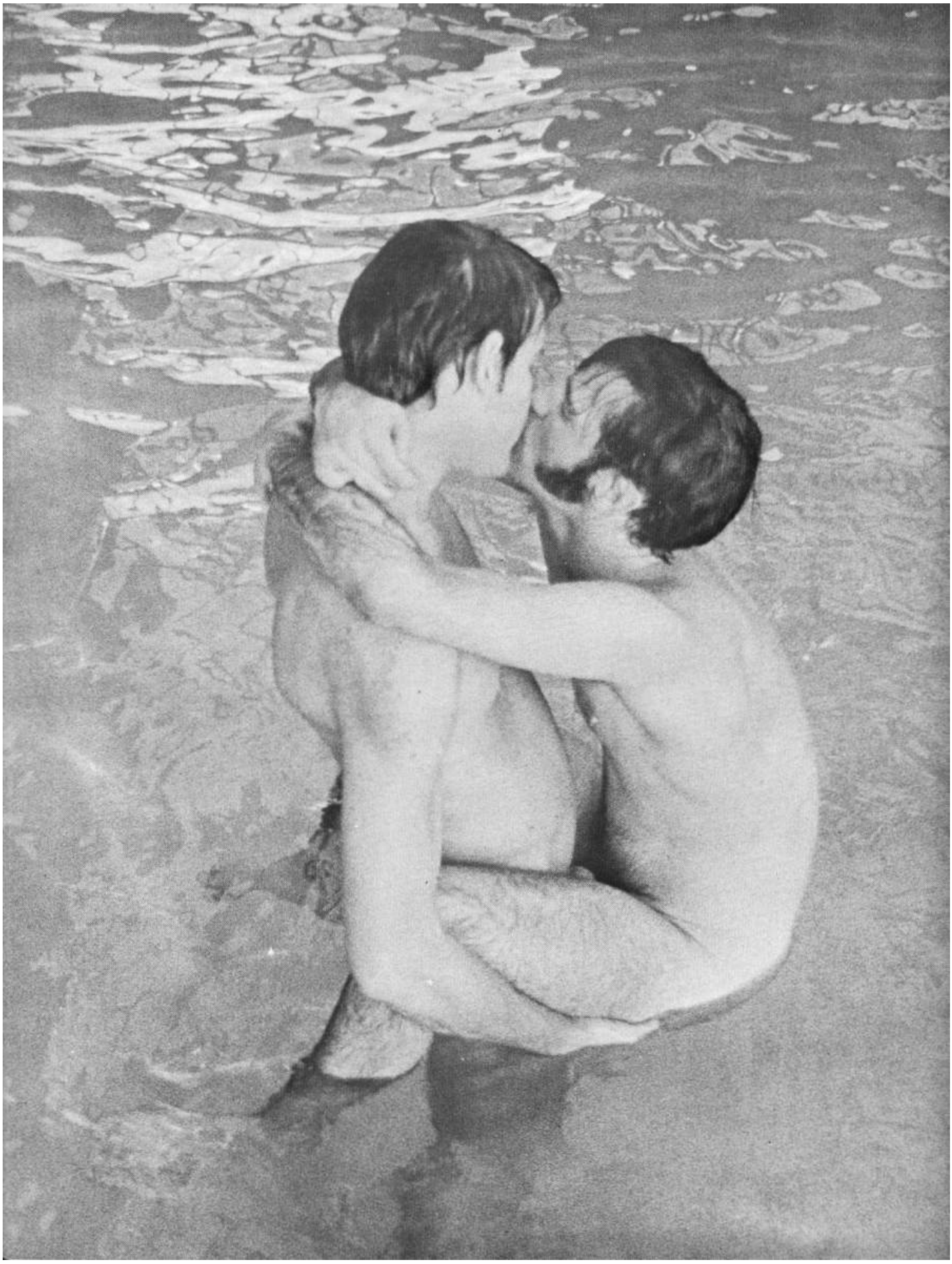


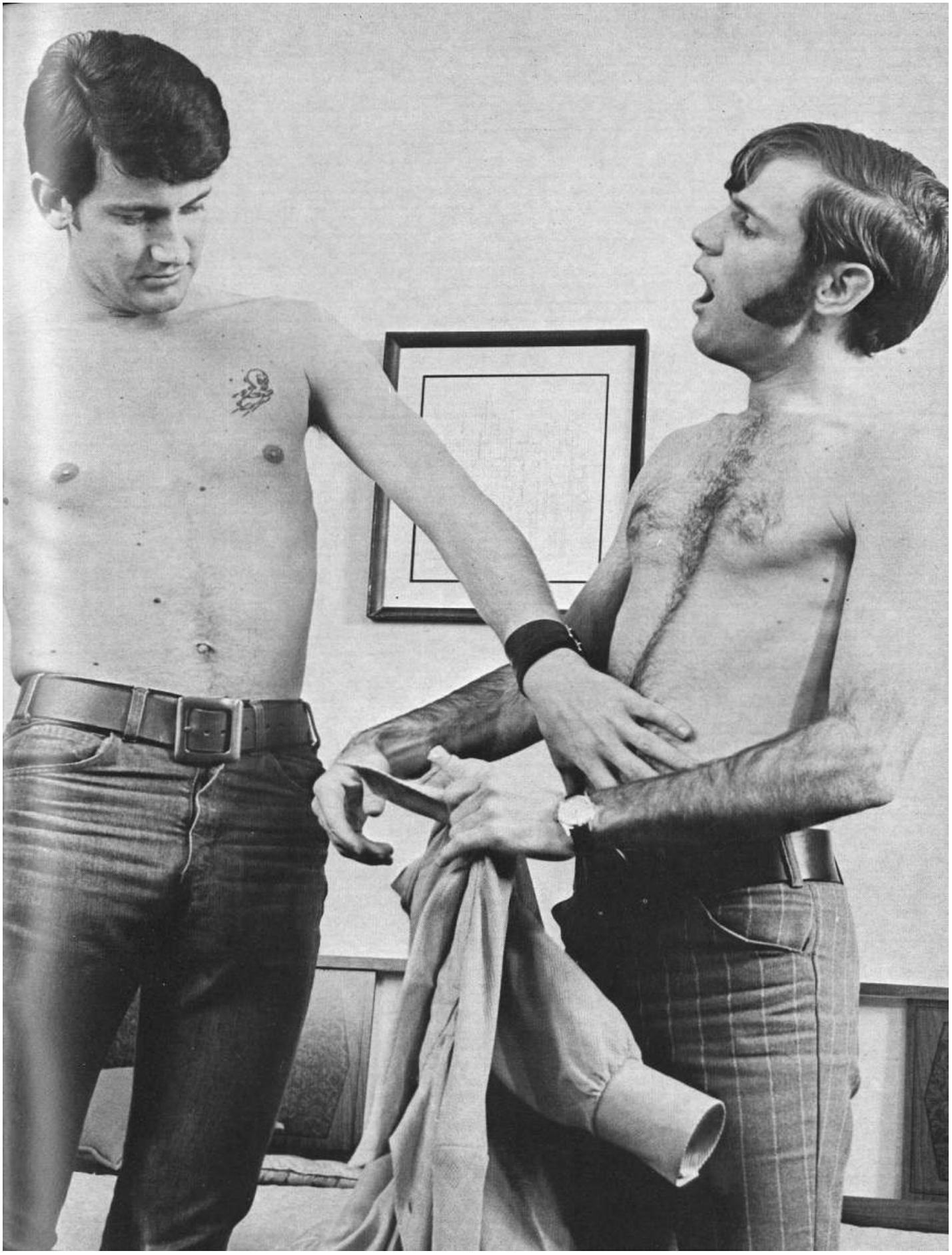


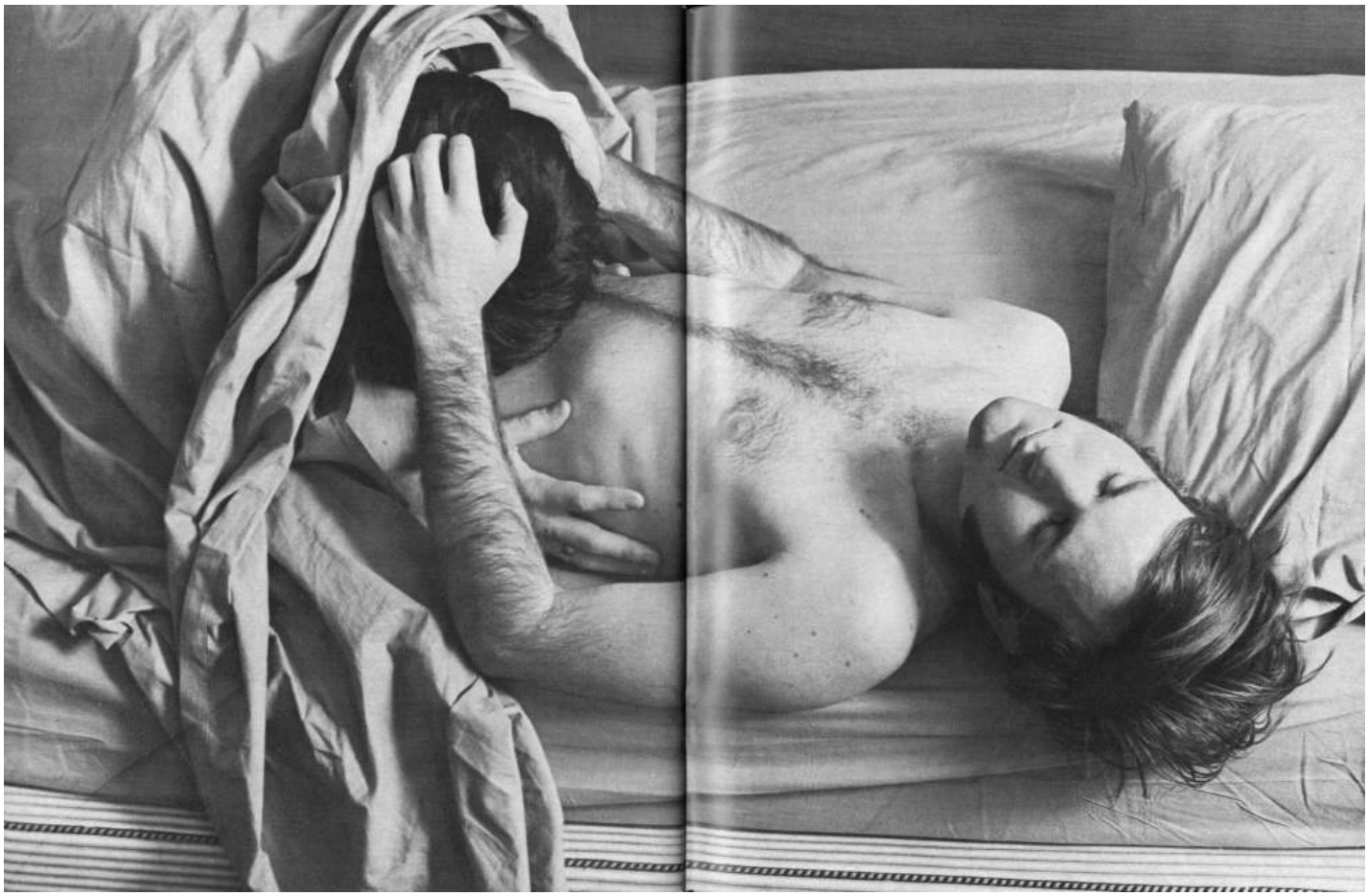
gradually, I'm becoming just a little wiser about what makes people happy. That's what a philosopher is supposed to do, isn't it. What kind of philosopher can sit and read all his life and finally write up a collection of other people's thoughts and spend the rest of his days teaching Plato to a bunch of undergraduates. I'm a philosopher and a historian. I know what people think and I know what they're doing—even if they don't know themselves.

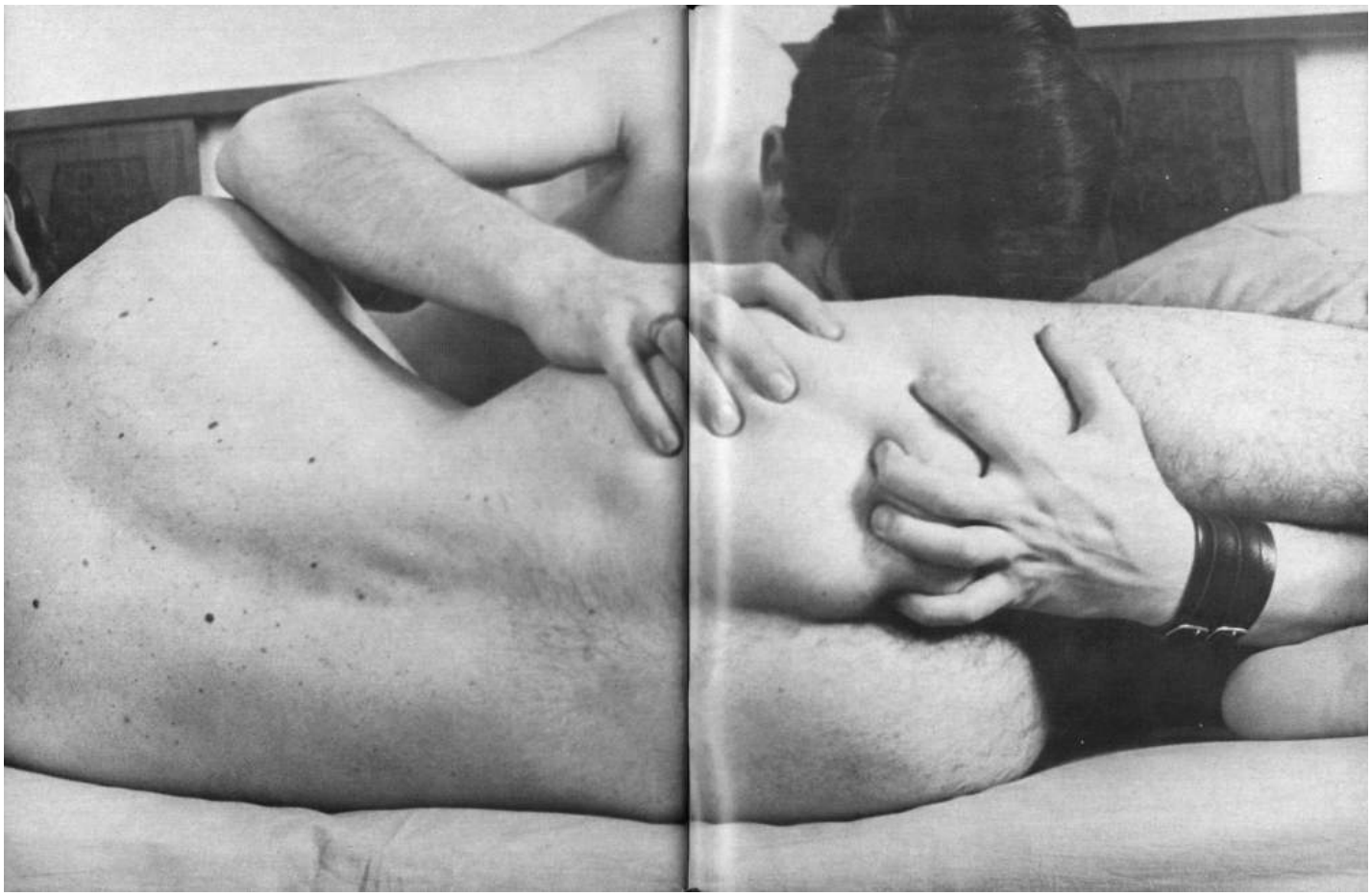
I'll write it all out some day. When it's all clear in my own mind—that will be the time to write it all down and explain to people like me that there is still a way of making life an adventure. My way is to hitch rides around the country—meet guys and talk to them. Live with them—share their pains, their crusades, their lives—work beside my fellow men, and earn a living. It doesn't matter where you are or what you're doing as long as you keep your eyes open and keep thinking. Then you'll see what it is that you have to do. Then, you have to have the guts to do whatever it is that has to be done. It's not hard to see what is right and what is wrong with the world. The hard part is taking the consequences for what you have to do.

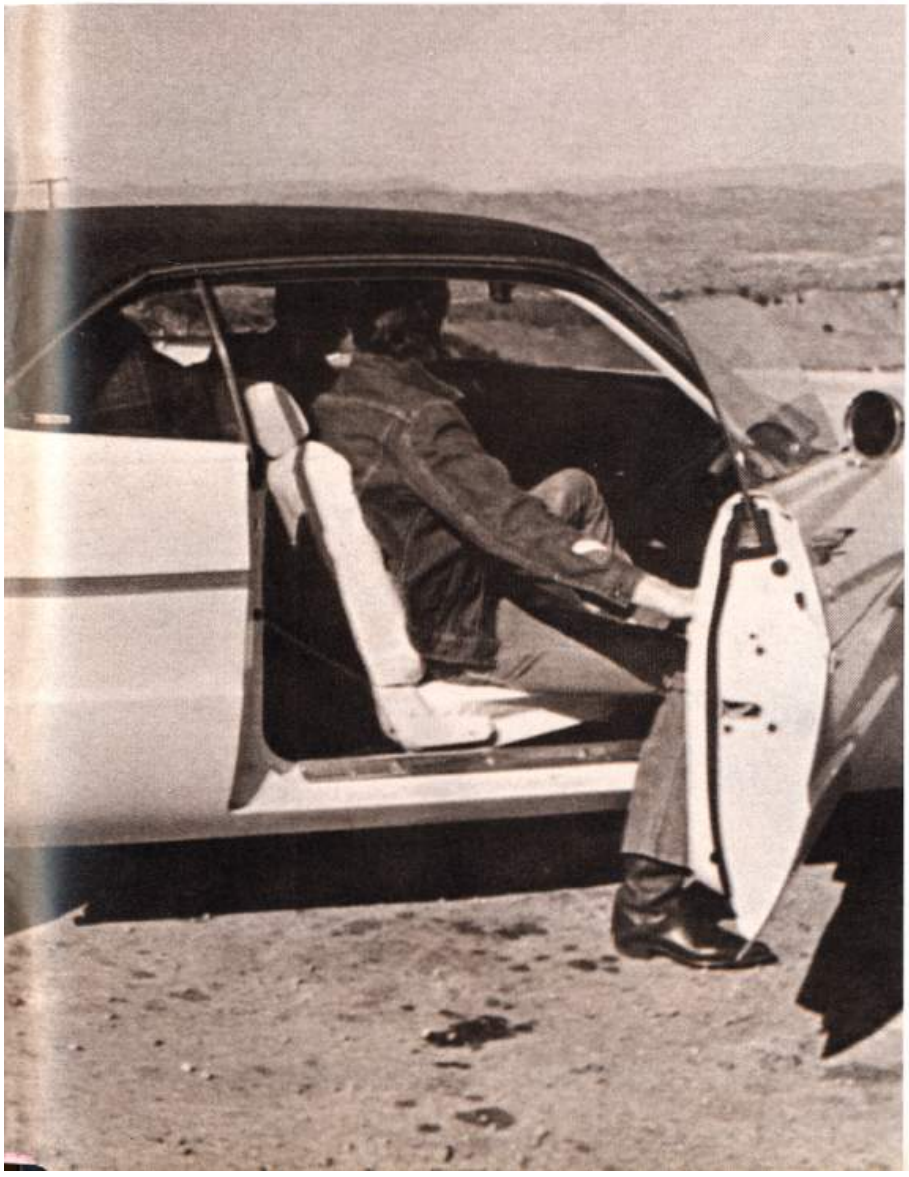
So, that's where my head is, friend. That's what I care about, and that's why I live the way I do.











So, if you're driving down the city streets and you see a forlorn-looking kid standing there thumbing a ride, you know it won't be me. But if you're whipping along the broad highway and you see a tallish guy standing by the side of the road and he is standing straight and looking you right in the eye, it'll be me, Raymond Sanders the hitch hicking philosopher. Give me a ride to wherever you happen to be going. I'll listen to you talk if you feel like talking. I'll talk if you just want somebody talking to keep you awake. But if we get into a discussion, you would do well to have examined your own head beforehand because I question your values. If you tell me that the days of adventure and excitement are over in this world, if you tell me that computers run the world, if you tell me that nobody has an identity of his own anymore, I'll prove you wrong.